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FRED'S
LITTLE DAUGHTER
SARA-TRAINER SMITH

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FRED'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.

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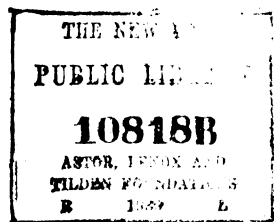
SARA TRAINER SMITH.

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FRED'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.

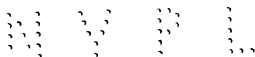
CHAPTER I.

WANTED—AN ANSWER.

“WHAT is to be done with little Katharine Morris?”

Every one in the Yard was asking this question, and no one answered it. But whether they asked it or did not answer it, all alike looked very sad and said, softly and kindly, “Poor little thing!”

Only one week before, few of them had known her except as one of the Morris children. She was just a merry little girl like many another in a full and happy home the world over. People smiled pleasantly on her when they met her running about, rosy and



smiling herself, but she was neither "that magnificent boy," as they spoke of Fred, nor "that great, splendid fellow" the baby, nor even one of the twins, so they forgot her as soon as she was out of sight. Now—now she was too sadly well known in the Yard, and out of it wherever the papers carry the news. She was now the lonely little orphan, left fatherless and motherless, sisterless and brotherless, in one bright, short day.

No wonder every one said, very softly and very kindly, "Poor little thing!"

The yellow fever had been very bad in the Yard that year from the first, and the other officers had hurried away on leave, or sent their families North without them, as soon as it appeared. But Katharine's father was the surgeon, and his place was with the sick. He had tried to arrange for the going away of his wife and children, but one disappointment after another had altered all his plans. It ended in waiting quietly in their own quarters for a long leave, when it should all be



over in the cooler weather. At any rate, his wife did not wish to leave him to the lonely horror of such a summer in the midst of suffering. She was so bright and strong and loving that she feared nothing, and believed, with care and peace, they were all safe in the place where it was "home" and where his duty kept him.

It had been a pleasant summer to the children, who only saw that their father was very busy, out a great deal, and very tired and quiet when he came in. He was not so ready to play with them as usual, and very often he "forgot" to pet them in his gentle, tender way. They missed some of their little playmates, too, but "mudder" was better than any one else to "make a good time," and now she had nothing to do in her "playtime"—no ladies to visit, no dinners to go to, and no dances to get ready. They had her all to themselves, and they asked for nothing better. They were not afraid, for they did not know the meaning of the word, and they

never fretted. "Mudder" kept them always glad.

At last it seemed all to be over. Some of the officers and their families were back at their quarters, and Dr. Morris had begun to think of rest and freedom from care and responsibility of helpless men's lives, which always weighed upon him, when there came an unexpected outbreak of the pest, and it swept the Morris's home like a swift, sharp sword. Fred, the eldest child, was the first to sicken, but the doctor himself was the first to die. A few hours after the fever had shown itself he fell at the bedside of his wife and baby, never rousing again. They carried him to the grave at sunset, with the dead baby in his arms, and through the room where his wife and Fred lay dying. The twins lived only until midnight. In the dim dawn of the next day Katharine crept noiselessly from her little white bed in the dressing-closet of her mother's room, where she had cried herself to sleep, only knowing that everything was

strange and sad, and peeped timidly from the window at the silent funeral. Three coffins—the twins were scarcely more than babies and had never slept apart—and a few of the officers and men were all she saw. She was too little and too ignorant of all sorrow to know fully what it meant for her, and there was no one—no one at all—to tell her anything. But the empty room in wild confusion, the empty beds in the disordered nursery which she saw through the open door, the silence where she had always heard at least a gentle breathing or a child's soft, restless murmur, were quite enough to chill and frighten even merry little Katharine. She began to cry piteously and to run from room to room, calling for Charlotte. A vague yet awful certainty that her father and mother could not answer; that, if they could have helped it, they would never have left her "all alone," drove her thus to the nurse for comfort. But Charlotte had gone hours before, terrified into helplessness by the very name

of the fever. The other servants never slept in the house, and had not returned after the doctor's funeral, even the best and most stout-hearted among them appalled at the misery they could not combat or relieve. In vain poor little Katharine called and screamed. The house was empty, closed and locked, and, more than that, avoided. Katharine was forgotten.

It was several hours before a thought of her occurred to Mrs. Ramsey, the Captain's wife, as she sat in her own room holding her sleeping baby, and thinking with a softened heart over the sorrowful emptiness of the once charming home. The Morrises had been such a loving, joyous, beautiful family. Father and mother and children had all been so handsome, and he so tender, she so wise and glad-hearted. The baby was just about the age of her own dear little son, and the dear little twins! And Fred! And—oh, what had become of the other little girl? No one had thought of her.

Mrs. Ramsey dropped the baby on the bed and rushed down to her husband in the dining-room. A party of the officers were with him, already discussing and arranging the affairs of their brother officer, for whom they were so suddenly called to act. Mrs. Ramsey burst in upon their grave consultation in a way that startled them, and brought the Captain to his feet.

“My dear!” he exclaimed—he was much older than she was and had not been married many years—“Are you ill? What has happened?”

“Oh, the little girl!” cried Mrs. Ramsey. “Little Katharine Morris. Does any one know—has she been taken care of by any one? Oh, do you think she can have been forgotten in that awful house?”

The look of consternation was general on all faces.

“There is another child, you know,” continued Mrs. Ramsey. “There were *five* Morris children, I am sure.”

"Well, really, I don't know," said some one, looking helplessly around him.

"If Mrs. Birney were here, she could tell all about it," put in her husband, "but I can't say, although the children were often in with our little ones. But they were all of one size."

"So they were," assented the youngest man among them, "but I remember this little thing. She was a good-natured little mite—not so pretty as the others—with dark eyes and hair."

Mrs. Ramsey burst into tears at the mere thought of the horrors she had imagined for the child if forgotten. She was a tender-hearted young mother, who had seen nothing of trouble or sickness of any kind, and this had been a terrible first experience. The Captain had to leave the others to soothe her, suggesting to them that some one go at once to the house and find out if the child were there. The chairs had been pushed back from the table where they were bending over

reports and notes when Mrs. Ramsey entered, and writing and revising had all been scattered to the winds in the shock she had administered. They were ready to walk out into the open air, at least, although the kindest-hearted among them shrank from the thought of the fever-laden atmosphere of the deserted house and its distressing memories.

But they walked on, silently and steadily, the short distance that lay between them and the pretty, vine-shaded porch. The man with the keys followed them quickly, and a group of spectators gathered at a distance, already whispering among themselves of noises heard and "white ladies" seen at the windows. Captain Ramsey, walking rapidly, overtook them at the door, and it was thrown open.

No sooner had they entered than a small, white-gowned, dishevelled creature flew towards them down the stairs. With outstretched arms and trembling, silent lips

little Katharine appealed for protection to every manly heart before her. Captain Ramsey made one step forward and took her in his arms. "My dear little girl!" he said. "My poor little one! Will you ever forgive us? The child is as cold as ice even on such a day as this!" he said indignantly, turning to the others.

She could not speak. She had cried and called until she was hoarse and weak, and she was hungry and thirsty and—oh, so frightened! She thought they were never coming—that no one was ever coming, "not ever any more." And oh, what had they done with "farder" and "mudder"? In the agony of her terror and her longing she looked up and gasped the beloved names.

Captain Ramsey folded her closer. The others turned and went out on the porch.

"I can't stand this!" said the youngest man among them, and choked on the words. The others shook their heads, and one of them silently raised his hat.

"My dear little girl!" was all the Captain could utter.

He took up a plaid that lay on a chair in the hall, and folded it about her, tucking it over her little bare white feet, and covering her poor little tangled curls with its soft warmth. He wanted to wrap her from head to feet in love and sympathy and protection, to be father, mother, sister, brother—all that the lonely little thing might want or miss.

"Come with me to Mrs. Ramsey," he said. "She will know what you want, and how to tell you all you do not know. She will do—will do as your mother would like to have it done, my dear."

And there was something in the Captain's grave speech and quiet strength that Katharine understood and took comfort from. When he unfolded the plaid from her little flushed face in his own parlor five minutes later, and looked from it to his wife's gentle eyes, the little orphan was sleeping, tired out and at rest in a child's confiding trust.

And then it was, after that rescue from the empty house, that every one began to ask the question, "What is to be done with little Katharine Morris?" The Ramseys might take her into their hearts as into their home, and the others might all grieve with her and for her—and they did, too, for they were deeply and unselfishly moved. Her father's life had been too noble, and too regardless of self, not to leave its mark, and her mother had deserved well of all women and all men—but there were many things to be considered. Had she no relatives? Were there no homes anywhere upon which there had fallen a shadow with that death-stroke which she might help to lift? Might there not be some prospect, some future that was her due, to which they might help her?

Certainly there was something to be done with little Katharine Morris. The question remained, however, what was that something?

CHAPTER II.

ANSWERED.

THE one who was least interested in the question was Katharine herself. After the terrible ordeal through which she had passed on that first morning, the relief and security of Captain Ramsey's kind protection and the loving sweetness of pretty Mrs. Ramsey's reception and care were all such a baby needed in her first grief. She had not fully awakened when the Captain laid her on the bed beside the sleeping boy Mrs. Ramsey had so hurriedly abandoned in the shock of remembering Katharine, but had smiled drowsily and sweetly in his face, and turned on the pillow to the unconsciousness of a child's healthy sleep after excite-

ment, from which everything had hitherto guarded her.

Mrs. Ramsey watched that sleep anxiously and was at her side the instant she awoke with such soothing and gentle gayety as could only encourage forgetfulness, and Katharine met every advance with her usual happy disposition. A child of little more than five years old learns to remember only by losses, and Katharine had never before missed from her short life anything that she valued. At first she was modestly shy but pleased, and gradually grew well acquainted with Mrs. Ramsey and the baby. The Captain coming in later, heard a gay little laugh. He was startled but relieved—immensely relieved.

“A mere baby, thank God!” he thought. “It is better so. She will never suffer as she would have done had she been older. Every one must be kind to an orphan. And such an orphan as this!”

He went up the stairs almost eagerly and light-heartedly to pet her, for in his secret

heart he had been dreading such sorrow as he had seen that morning.

But, when the twilight brought bedtime to the nursery, came the memory of it all—of the sights and sounds she could not have been spared the day before, of the early, lonely waking in the empty house, of the long day without the dear playfellows, and, above all, of the bedtime romp and chatter with the beloved “farder” and “mudder,” so mysteriously absent. All broke with an overwhelming force upon the little, happy heart, and the outcry could not be hushed.

“Oh, my mudder, my dear mudder! Pease tum, mudder!” she wailed, standing in the middle of the room with expectant face towards the door. “Mudder, if you’ll tum, I won’t be naughty—not never!”

There was an effort, heroic and pathetic to the lookers-on, to check the sobs, and even to smooth the little face into a trembling smile. The little hands were tightly clasped, and the little bosom heaving

under the restraint. "Mudder don't 'ike tryin'," she said, apologetically to Mrs. Ramsey, whose own cheeks were wet with tears. "But, oh!" with a sudden recurrence of her woe, "she's been so long! An' I *do* want her!"

"I know you do, darling!" was all Mrs. Ramsey could say. How was she to ever soothe or coax such real and comfortless sorrow as this?

But, little by little, a word and a soft caress, a close clasp and a gentle assurance of companionship through the night, and, finally, the suggestion of pleasing the dear mother by that good behavior the little one seemed to have clearly before her as her rule of conduct, brought peace to the troubled little soul.

"An' farder, too," she said half jealously. "Farder is more sorry an' more sorry when the chil'ens is bad. Farder is dood."

"Yes, darling, he is. Every one knows that. And Katharine will be good, I am

sure, so that father and mother shall be pleased."

"Yes," with a long, quivering sigh. "An' you. An' him. Mudder said if I be dood, everybody loves me. I will be dood—in a minute."

It was a struggle of one years older and far wiser, and it was victorious.

"I am dood now," she said, looking up with a smile. "Put me in bed, an'—you tan tate the light away."

Mrs. Ramsey lifted her tenderly to the white nest and covered her with a mother's touch. From the pillow came softly as she was leaving the room the plaintive voice once more :

"If you will tiss me—like mudder, I tould make believe. An' if he would tiss me like farder. Farder always does."

Mrs. Ramsey turned back. She could kiss the little anxious mouth, but she could not speak—not even when she stood at the Captain's side in the cheerful room below and he

looked up to ask if he could do anything ? When she could answer him, it dimmed his eyes. Poor little thing ! Almost reverently he bent over the pillow, and with a prayer for the dead father and a promise to him surging through his heart, he kissed and blessed the orphan.

She neither moved nor spoke again. But Mrs. Ramsey knew it was long before she fell asleep.

From that time she was like a child of their own, both to them and in her own view of her position. Obedient and loving, unquestioning and ready to meet every suggestion from them as a child responds to its parents, she gave little sign that she understood and felt the change that had come to her. To Mrs. Ramsey and the Captain, however, she now and then gave proof that she had not forgotten—that potent as ever was the resolution to “be dood” that the dear, dear “farder and mudder” might be glad. Otherwise, she was content and happy—a

merry and a generous nature that must make friends.

Glad indeed was Mrs. Ramsey that this was so when the change came. It comforted her not a little to believe that no one *could* be harsh or cold to the dear little stray nestling.

"I have had a letter at last," said the Captain, coming in one morning weeks later. He looked grave and perplexed. Mrs. Ramsey knew without a question the letter it must be and wasted no words.

"Is there any one? Do they want her?" she asked at once.

"Yes," answered the Captain to both questions, resting his head thoughtfully on his hand. "There seems to be a number of them. I think there must have been some kind of trouble among them. This letter is from Katharine's aunt—her father's sister. It does not speak of the mother at all."

He took it leisurely from his pocket and opened it. Mrs. Ramsey was very sure he was not glad to get it.

"It is a very good sort of letter," he said, presently. "Plenty of money where it came from, I am pretty sure. Read it and see what you think of it."

It was a very elegant letter. It was written on the finest paper—white, of course—and it was well written. That is, the lady who wrote it was used to letter-writing in a dainty style, with plenty of time at her command, as a lady should have, no abbreviations, and the perfect assurance that she knew exactly what to say to any one, from the Emperor of China to the gardener's boy, and from the queen to the cook. It began with a very agitated expression of grief at the death of her brother in "such a peculiarly distressing manner," and with the statement of unexplained "causes" for the news not having reached her at an earlier date—that is, the news of Katharine's survival, of whom she spoke only as "the child." She and her sister begged to hear at once all the details, and, also, to have "the child" sent to them.

With many apologies and assurances that she would have "communicated with the authorities at a *much* earlier date" had she been able to do so, the letter was signed in a dashing, yet distinct, scrawl "Sara Bronson Morris."

"I don't believe she cares whether 'the child' is a boy or a girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Ramsey. "How very strange that they knew nothing of the family, and that no one knew enough to write a letter of some kind! Poor little Katharine! I wish we could keep her."

The Captain knew Mrs. Ramsey was not glad to get the letter either.

"Well, the fact that they have heard nothing directly from any one leads me to believe there was trouble in the family. Oh, nothing tragic or disgraceful, of course, but some falling out. Otherwise, they would have known some particulars of the family life. But she ought to be with them. Morris would like that, I'm sure."

"Why should he, if they were not friends?"

"Because a family is meant to belong together. Every man knows it is not exactly the most respectable thing in the world for his people to hold off from him and not even know whether his children are boys or girls or both. Morris was a man who loved his own, too. I imagine that tinge of sadness always about him was owing to this very thing. But we don't know anything about it. Only—it does seem to make it harder for the little thing. It is well for all of them that she is such a good little creature—the best child I ever saw! She may never know of this, if they only get to know her first."

"I wonder if she will want to go."

"No," said the Captain briefly. "She is not a child to take root in many places, although she will be obedient, and she has principles already. I must confess—I would like to keep her. But it is all right—it is all right!"

"Have you written to those people?"

"To Miss Sara Bronson Morris? Yes, I wrote at once. It is time they knew all there is to know. Any more delay might prejudice them against the child. There is more than one, for she speaks of her sister. I fancy—"

"Well?"

"Oh, it's nothing but a fancy! But that lady"—he pointed to the letter—"has a mind of her own and makes it up very decidedly out of scraps and trifles."

Mrs. Ramsey was doubly sure now that the Captain did not feel pleased or satisfied with the letter.

But he went out without more words, and came back in a better mood. He was a reasonable man, and he soon took himself to task for his "fancies." It might be that Miss Sara Bronson Morris—that great, running, dashing black name seemed always to pronounce itself to him in his thoughts—was quite other than he thought her, and, at all events, nothing must be said to the little girl

until more was known. No guesses of any kind must be made in her presence, for, whatever her sentiments, she must soon be borne away to find her only home with the strange aunts. Mrs. Ramsey agreed with him, and Katharine played on with the baby and the nurse as if she was settled for life in the Ramsey household.

CHAPTER III.

AT HOME.

THERE followed a correspondence that could not be hurried. Miss Sara Bronson Morris was a lady who "wanted to know" a great many things, but told very little of what she knew herself. She wrote for her sister as well as herself, but she never mentioned her sister's name, nor stated very exactly where either of them lived. Her letters were frequently dated from a place named Brightmar, but they were post-marked "here, there, and everywhere," now in Maryland, now in Pennsylvania, and now in Virginia. The Captain decided that she had plenty of money and "tripped about," as he said, visiting her family, and keeping them all in order, and that she would have a great deal to say

about Katharine's future, whatever the others might *do*.

But at length it was all arranged to the satisfaction of Miss Sara Bronson Morris, if not exactly as the Captain would have had it. Katharine was to go North with the Lyndes on the steamer to New York. From there she was to go to Brightmar with a friend of the Morris family—a gentleman who would call on Mrs. Lynde at the hotel and take charge of the little girl.

“I wish I knew where she is going,” said the Captain uneasily. “I don’t suppose there is anything wrong. It’s just a woman’s way of doing business. I mean a woman who has never had any real business of her own to attend to or manage. She is such a little thing to go alone.”

“She is not going alone,” said Mrs. Ramsey. “Mrs. Lynde will take the best of care of her, and she and I have arranged it all. She will find out something from the gentleman when he calls. She can do it, I know.”

"Yes," said the Captain, only half satisfied.

"But—have you told her yet? She has no idea of any change. And she is to go on Saturday! This is Thursday."

The Captain did not reply. But presently he opened the door into the hall and called gently: "Katharine, my girlie!" She came running down the stairs. Time had passed quickly in the letter-writing, waiting, and changing of plans, so that it was seven months since that morning when she ran into his arms in her father's deserted quarters. Seven months' time makes more difference to five years than it does to thirty-five, and Katharine was a much older child than she had been then. No longer "one of five," she had received more attention from every one, independent of the interest she still excited as the only surviving member of her family, and quick to observe, clever, thoughtful, she had grown out of her baby ways into a sweet and sensible childhood.

"I want you, little maid," said the Captain. "I want to have a talk with you—a 'real long' talk. Isn't that what you like?"

"An' Johnny, too? He's not asleep. An' he's had his dinner."

"No, not Johnny to-day—only Katharine Morris, my good little girlie. Sit down here on this big, old sofa, quite close to me. There, now we can talk in comfort! Why, what a great, big, grown-up young lady you are getting to be!"

It was hard work. The Captain wished he had left it to Mrs. Ramsey. But, then, he remembered she had said she would not—could not tell it, if Katharine was never told.

"Is this talking?" gravely questioned Katharine. "Must grown-ups do this way?"

"Yes, my darling, 'grown-ups' must do very much this way—and all sorts of things they don't want to do, either. Do you know your Aunt Sara, Katharine? Did you ever see her? Ever hear of her?"

"It's Katie Lynde has aunts. I never had any."

"Well, that is what we must talk about. Yes, you have an Aunt Sara and—an Aunt Mary. I think that must be her name."

The child looked at him steadily.

"Did they know farder?"

The Captain nodded.

"An' mudder?"

He nodded again, watching her solemn little face with the feeling that some dim memory was struggling to make itself clear in her curly head.

"Have they gone to my Aunt Sara's house?"

"No, girlie. They have gone to—gone to their Father's house. I cannot tell you anything about that, but they are safe in it. Aunt Sara's house is in Brightmar. Did your mother never tell you about it?"

"No, she never did. Nor farder."

Then she was silent, and no question made it easier for the Captain to tell what must be

told. Gradually—awkwardly enough—he did tell it, and made it all clear enough to her. She must go away on Saturday from Mrs. Ramsey and from the baby and from him; she must go with Mrs. Lynde, whom she did not know very well, and with Katie, who cried, and with Watterson, whom she disliked as a good little girl dislikes a bad little boy, who tells what is not true, and teases. Above all, she must go to this unknown Aunt Sara, and, perhaps, Aunt Mary.

The Captain had no reason for bestowing Mary as her name on the “sister” who moved as a stately shadow through Miss Morris’ half of the correspondence, but the name seemed sweet and soothing to him, and he hoped rather than thought it would be the familiar sound to welcome home his “girlie.”

“How do you know?” asked Katharine, after a pause that lasted long enough to disturb the Captain as to her reception of the news. “Who told you? Maybe—maybe it

is like the things Watterson says?"—with a gleam of hope.

"No," said the Captain hastily, for the wistful face moved him, "no, it is all true. Your Aunt Sara has written to me many times. I had a letter from her this morning, and she wants to see you very much indeed. She has wanted you a long time, but we could not send you alone. Now that Mrs. Lynde must go, it will not do to wait any longer. But we shall miss our girlie! One boy baby is not enough to fill up her place—no indeed!"

He gathered her very close to him, and kissed her with that feeling of a sacred trust from her dead father and mother which always accompanied his caresses. She clung to him, but said not a word.

So, it was told. And this was Thursday!

It was very dull in the Ramsey's quarters. But, as they grew used to the idea, the parting took on some hopeful aspects. Mrs. Ramsey talked a great deal to Katharine of the

things she was sure the child would see on the voyage to New York and the long railroad journey to Brightmar, and dwelt with lively interest on the pleasant things to be encountered. But she was too wise to picture imaginary delights, or to bring into the child's fancy ideal surroundings—above all, ideal relatives who most assuredly would never exist. For neither child nor “grown-up” ever found a stranger quite what he imagined him before meeting, and Mrs. Ramsey was careful not to excite hopes that might be disappointed, or to create by some chance word a shrinking from the new relatives that would repel an anxious affection of which she had no knowledge. So of the aunts nothing was said more than the facts that were known. They were waiting for Katharine, and they would tell her all she was to do or to know as they thought best for her father's daughter.

All too soon Saturday came and the little orphan was again bereft. On her part there was a sad acceptance of it that was most

touching. It was as if she had grown used to sorrow, and expected it. But Captain and Mrs. Ramsey knew there was neither carelessness nor coldness under the still face and the slow, silent kiss.

As for the Yard in general, a sigh of relief mingled with its good-bys, for Katharine had been a sorrowful reminder of most sad things that were possible to all of them.

Throughout the whole trip Mrs. Lynde "had no trouble with her," as she wrote to Mrs. Ramsey. Except that she was quieter than usual, she was like any other little girl, and had a smile ever ready. She watched eagerly all the time for each pleasure and novelty for which Mrs. Ramsey's descriptions had prepared her, and very curiously she pieced together in her mind what she expected and what she found. But she did find many things that were pleasant to her in her childish way, and she lost nothing of happiness that a child could find. She was indeed "a good little thing."

The steamer was delayed, and the gentleman was waiting when they reached the wharf. He must take the train South immediately, if they could reach the station. Mrs. Lynde wrote that he was unmistakably a gentleman, and that he spoke of Miss Sara Bronson Morris and "the others" with great respect and cordial liking, but that, without direct questioning on which she could not venture, she had not been able to discover anything to interest the friends of Katharine's old home.

"There is a Mrs. Thompson, Johnson, or Jackson, somewhere among them who has a large family of young folks. I think she is the sister of whom Captain Ramsey talked, but as he never mentioned her name, I cannot be sure."

Mrs. Ramsey read this sentence to the Captain across the breakfast table, and he nodded his head in assent.

"Yes, yes ! I am sure she must be Mary,"

he said. "That sounds like it. Mary, the children's mother!"

The gentleman who had come for the little maid was not very old nor yet very young. He had a quiet, kind, rather shy manner, as though he were not used to little girls. He was not prepared, in truth, to find her such a *very* little girl, but he made the best of it, and found the best very good indeed. She looked out of the window at the passing lights and shadows of the green and pleasant country until she grew very sleepy. Then she put her head down on the arm of the chair for a long nap. A lady who had been watching her quiet little way from the other side of the car, came over at that, and placed her more comfortably on the broad, cushioned seat, covering her with a light wrap, and tucking her safely in from all danger of taking cold or of falling off.

When she awoke it was quite dark beyond the black squares of the windows, which reflected the bright lights within in a manner

that startled her. She sat up hurriedly, looking about her with very wide open eyes. The gentleman was near her, but every one else had left the car.

"Is it to-morrow?" she asked. "Was it yesterday when I went to sleep?"

"Well, I think it was!" he exclaimed, and laughed a little.

That made it all right in a moment. After that they were better acquainted and talked quite like old friends.

"We'll soon be there now," he said before long. "I expect your Aunt Sara to meet you, with some of the boys and girls."

"Are they her boys and girls?"

"Bless you, no, indeed! There are two or three mothers, but she is not one of them. There's your Aunt Penelope, you know."

"No, I don't know anybody. Are the chil'en good?"

"Oh, I think so! Good as usual. I don't know much about children. Are all children good?"

"Our chil'ens is. But not one boy—he's bad. I don't like him—not much—only all the others."

"Bad boy!" said the gentleman very decidedly. "I know he must be bad when you say that. But here we are! I think you'll like every one at Brightmar. *I* do."

The train stopped only for a moment, and they were too busy gathering up wraps and packages for another word then. Katharine had a very small basket which Katie Lynde had packed with a midget's luncheon of tiny crackers and candy, but the gentleman had bundles and canes and umbrellas without number, it seemed.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS SARA BRONSON MORRIS AND OTHERS.

WHEN they were at last out on the platform, away went the train like a flashing and twinkling chain of fire dragged into the great, dark woods by some giant's hand. Then all was darkness around them except where the dim station lamp glimmered, high over the door of a little shed-like room. It was a country station—not a sign of a house or a street or a man anywhere.

“Anybody here from Brightmar?” called the gentleman into the darkness.

“Oh, hello there!” shouted some one out of it. “Come around here, will you? I can't leave the horses. They're skittish.”

It was a clear, boyish voice, strong but youthful.

"Just stand here a moment, will you ? I'll find the carriage and the way to it. You needn't be afraid of anything. There is no one here."

Katharine was not at all afraid. She was filled with wonder and curiosity and thought it very strange indeed.

It was not much more than a moment before the gentleman was back at her side, without his wraps and canes.

"I think I'll just take you up and carry you," he said. "It's so very dark and you don't know the way at all. This sort of walking is rather rough for little feet, even in daytime."

Then he picked her up and carried her into the very blackness of darkness, for the trees came so close to the little station the light of the open sky was completely shut out. Katharine—who had never been in the complete darkness of night before, for the Yard was al-

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ways lighted when there was no moon—wondered how he could see to take a step. She began to feel afraid. Poor little thing! It had not been very long since she did not even know there was such a thing as fear, but now—so many things were changed for her.

The gentleman did see, however, and, stepping off the platform, followed a path of some kind. Presently he said: "Here we are!" and there immediately began a great noise of stamping and moving, with a good many odd commands that Katharine had never heard before. But she knew they came from a driver to his horses, and, as soon as the noises ceased, she was put out of the gentleman's arms into a carriage of some sort, and into a soft pile of delicately perfumed stuff. Some one clasped her suddenly in a pair of strong yet slender arms, and a warm, soft cheek was laid close against her own.

"Oh, you dear, dear little thing! Fred's own dear little daughter!" said a sweet and gentle voice.

"Are you there, Miss Sara?" cried the gentleman. "Why on earth didn't you say so before? I thought there was only one of the boys."

"Now, Mr. Courtney! Did you really think I would let poor Fred's only child—all we have left of him, too!—arrive at this hour without meeting her? You are the most—the most——"

"Oh, I'm all right! Well, there she is, just as she was delivered to me, except that she's the better of a good sleep. And I can assure you she is not 'one bit of trouble,' as the lady said who committed her to my care."

The slender arms gave Katharine a little hug and the warm cheek pressed hers again.

"I know she's just a darling!" said the voice. "When we first heard—it—I told Penelope exactly what must be done at once. Of course it *was* done. And here she is. Jeff, do be careful! You needn't graze every tree between here and the house. There's the

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great oak to the left. It ought to be on the right."

This was said with the utmost composure, although Mr. Courtney sprang up in alarm, and Jeff suddenly checked the horses. But he was equal to the occasion, and they were soon bowling along the open road in the face of a beautiful, still night, a few stars glimmering faintly over the dark line of the mountains.

Katharine lay on the fragrant shoulder and looked away out into the sky. The way she was passed about from one person to another was certainly getting to be very bewildering. Who was this, now, in whose arms she felt so much at home? Could this be Aunt Sara—of whom she had had a secret dread she had not dared to utter? She was getting to know so many people. There used to be only two, "farder" and "mudder." There came a catch in her breath, she did not know why.

It was heard, however, and attention was

again centred on her, for the voice and Mr. Courtney had kept up such a scattered fire of question and answer that she had half forgotten they were thinking of her all the time.

"We are almost home," said the voice. "You must be so hungry and so tired! Did you give her any supper, Mr. Courtney? Of course you did not! What are men good for, will you tell me?"

"Now, Miss Sara, Miss Sara!" protested Mr. Courtney. "I do declare she was sound asleep until we almost reached the station. Now how was I to get her anything then? And what time had she to eat it? And what would have been the use, at any rate, when she was so near home, where everything is so much better than anywhere else?"

"Of course it was useless to get anything *then*. But that is just what I mean. Men never do what they ought to do at the right time. Why didn't you get her something in Baltimore? Or—somewhere else?"

"The next time I bring Miss Katharine Morris from New York to Brightmar, if she goes to sleep, I shall wake her up at stated intervals and see that she is fed. I shall be on time for once."

"Oh, ridiculous!" said the laughing voice as the carriage swung round a turn in the road and stopped instantly.

A great door at the top of a flight of stone steps was thrown open, and a houseful of people seemed to tumble out of a great lighted hall and down the steps.

"Did she come, Aunt Sara?"

"Is she inside or with Jeff?"

"Is Mr. Courtney there?"

"Hello, Mitter Tortney! Tee me! I dot new towzers!"

"Oh, children, do—for goodness' sake!"

"I say! Stop that noise, will you? I'll send every last one of you to bed on the spot."

Amid the babel this last voice broke loud and clear, with a ring of authority that hushed all the others. It was evidently the

voice of the master of the house and of the occasion, and the next instant its owner had Katharine in his arms. He was a large man, with gray hair and a great gray beard, but he was as strong and straight and firm on his feet as a man in the prime of life. He looked eagerly into the little face as he carried her into the hall, and said, with the same tenderness as the voice in the carriage: "Fred's dear little daughter! You have come *home*, my dear!"

Then he placed her carefully on her feet. Immediately she was surrounded. So many faces were thrust into hers, so many hands reached out to touch her, so many voices spoke to her, that she could only stand motionless, looking from one to the other. The white-haired gentleman stood back a little, and a tall dark lady came to his side, crying softly and saying something in a low tone. On the other side Mr. Courtney leaned against the open door, smiling good-naturedly, hat in hand, and a tall young lady, very fair

and lovely, had stopped on the threshold to look down on the group under the hall lamp. They were all little folks—and all merry and jolly and loud and fearless. Some of the faces were strangely familiar, too. There was a look of Fred on more than one face, and the twins—there was one of them ! And, oh, the baby ! There he was, looking solemnly at her from the protection of the dark lady's sweeping skirt. What did it mean ? Where was she ?

In an instant the tall young lady was at her side and the slender arms whose clasp she already knew were around her. The voice, too, which she had heard in the carriage was the one which spoke to her, soothing and petting, welcoming and comforting, scolding the children and answering their questions all in a breath.

“ Oh, children, she is so tired ! You frighten her—you really do. Remember she is quite strange to you—to all of us, and she is lonely. Stand off ! Let her get her

breath ! Penelope, call off your savage brood, will you ? ”

“ Oh, Aunt Sara ! You ought to be ashamed of yourself ! And we all love you so dearly, too ! ”

“ I know it. If I didn't know it, do you think I would say anything that sounds so hateful and means nothing bad ? We all love one another, of course. That's the reason we can do as we please. And I am sure you will all please to make this dear little Katharine at home here. She's only one more of us. You will have plenty of time to talk and to look and to get fully acquainted after I have told her who you all are. Come here, Frederick Morris Johnstone ! Katharine, you must know him first, dear, for he is your dear father's namesake and he is not so very much older than you are. He is eight years old. ”

He was a gentle little fellow, who took one of Katharine's small, cold hands in his, and stood shyly smiling at her in a way that encouraged her to smile shyly herself. Then,

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one by one, they were called up and presented, with many gay words and more and more laughing, as the introductions were made, and Miss Sara, who watched the stranger narrowly, saw that Katharine was losing her child's terror and embarrassment amid congenial warmth and merriment.

There were eight of them, not including the baby, who would not leave his mother's sheltering satin and lace for any one, although Mr. Courtney added his persuasions in the form of the silver top of his handsomest cane as a means of support.

"Well," said Miss Morris, "since Johnny won't come to us, we must go to him for just this once," and she moved towards him, holding Katharine's hand.

"Oh, I'm so glad his name is Johnny!"

It was the first sentence Katharine had volunteered, and her happy, contented nature spoke out in it. The baby's mother kissed her heartily.

"Thank you, dear!" she said. "I am glad

you like it, for the other children think it very ugly and old-fashioned. But it is his father's name, too."

"And Johnny Ramsey's. I loved him. He was good to me. They were *all* good."

"Bless the child!" said Miss Morris. "If she wasn't grateful, I should be afraid of her."

"Now, Sara!" cautioned the other. "I am your Aunt Penelope, dear, and—why, where is he? I thought he was here, Sara. At any rate he's your Uncle John and the baby's father. Kiss your little cousin, Johnny—a nice French kiss."

The baby had already smiled at her, and he now very obediently bent forward and took her face between his fat little palms, gravely and sweetly putting out his rosy lips and kissing hers with great emphasis. Then he drew back hurriedly and buried his face in his mother's soft, white neck. But he gave a little gurgle of delight that was certainly meant for laughter and happy welcome.

"Supper is ready!" burst in a chorus from

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the open door of a great room where there had been a noise of chairs, china, silver, and glass ever since their arrival.

“And Mr. Courtney is half starved, Aunt Sara. He says so.”

“An’ we’s dot tates,” came decisively from the owner of the new trousers.

“That settles it !” said Miss Morris.

And she led Katharine at once into the room, loosening her coat and taking off her hat as they went, for there had not been time to do it before. Then she had to stop to kiss her, and Aunt Penelope, who had followed, must have a kiss, too, and the gray-haired gentleman, who sat at the head of the long table, held out his arms to her, and all the children stood up in their places and clapped their hands and wriggled and jumped with excitement and delight.

“You perceive,” said Miss Morris to Mr. Courtney, “the family is small and a cousin is a new thing. Which accounts for the outburst.”

CHAPTER V.

WHAT KATHARINE MORRIS THOUGHT OF THEM.

THUS Katharine came home to her own people. She sat looking on during that first supper, eating very little, saying very little, but listening and taking in everything—the room, the table, the servants—with observant eyes. She thought she had never seen any one quite so pretty as her Aunt Sara, and Aunt Penelope was nice to look at too, with a smile in her eyes that was always there. She sat opposite to the gray-haired gentleman—whom some of them called “Uncle John” and more of them “papa”—while Katharine had the place between her Aunt Sara and Mr. Courtney. Jeff was the tallest and the oldest of the cousins, and sat oppo-

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site to her. A tall girl with red hair and a little girl with fair hair—the prettiest of the lot—said “Uncle John” and “Aunt Penelope” with Jeff, but the others were enough like Mr. Johnstone to show that they were his. Mr. Johnstone was loud and sharp with all of them, but delightfully merry with all the sharpness, and they laughed at him and with him as though they were all boys and girls together. Mrs. Johnstone did not say much, and said it slowly and softly when she did speak. Katharine soon found it was her voice she had heard in the confusion of her first arrival saying: “Oh, children, do—for goodness’ sake!” She was still saying it again and again, but no one appeared to hear her.

The uproar—for such it certainly was to a quiet person—went on exactly the same to the end. Miss Morris talked to Mr. Courtney about some place called Shirley and some people who were staying there, but she was very attentive to Katharine, and, while they

were all in the full tide of talking and eating, she pushed back her chair and rose, with energetic decision.

“This child is almost tired to death. I have been watching her grow paler and paler for the last ten minutes, and she has not eaten enough for a bird. I shall take her to bed, and I don’t think I shall come down again. She is so strange to it all that she may feel timid and need me. Pen, take care of Mr. Courtney, will you? He cannot stand much, and he has had a hard day’s work to-day.”

“Now, Miss Sara, Miss Sara!” were the last words Katharine heard as she went wearily out of the room, led by her aunt’s soft hand.

The long stairs, the long corridor, the great, dim room, and the great, high bed—it always seemed to Katharine that she must have dreamed them, for they never looked the same after that first going upstairs from the supper-table. And then, too, she was so soon dreaming really. Miss Morris had a

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swift, silent way of doing things about her that did not arouse the little maid from the drowsiness into which the bright eyes had watched her slipping that last ten minutes. The long sleep on the journey had not made her proof against the excitement and the hunger she was too excited to satisfy amid the strange and noisy surroundings. It was not long before Katharine was in the Yard, finding it dark and strange, and seeking vainly for the Captain and Mrs. Ramsey, while Johnny Johnstone and Johnny Ramsey's nurse walked on and on before her, neither stopping nor turning round when she called.

After that she went into a sound sleep—so sound that she could not dream, and never awoke until the broad, bright morning.

The sun was shining in at the high windows, filling the strange room with light and life. It was a pretty room, with old-fashioned furniture, but having new and gay curtains and pictures, gleaming china, and a great many new and shining silver articles on the

dressing-table, the wash-stand, and the chiffonier. Katharine's trunk stood open on the floor, and some of her clothes were neatly arranged near the bed. It looked as if Aunt Sara had been at work among them, she thought.

She lay quite still among the pillows, lazy and not inclined to get up. What a lot there was to think of since yesterday morning ! And what should she do when she did get up ? There did **not** seem to be any children about the house this morning, for all was quiet. What were the children's names ? Could she remember any of them ? The red-haired girl was Agnes, and the little one with pretty gold hair was Polly—she was sure of that much. Then there was Fred, and Jeff, and Johnny. Johnny was a pretty baby, almost—almost, not quite—as pretty as their own baby Angus. And, thinking of his pretty ways, the little heart grew very sore, and Katharine hid her face and cried herself to sleep in the very heart of all the sunshine.

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When Miss Morris came in an hour later, she was still sleeping. But, really, it was not very late even then, and Miss Morris and half a dozen more had been out to early Mass—a Mass of thanksgiving, too, for Katharine's safe arrival. The others were behind Miss Morris when she softly opened the door, and they peeped over her shoulder and under her arm at the little rosy face on the pillow. The bright eyes opened suddenly, for all their careful steps, and Katharine sat up, smiling. They came forward then and crowded around the bed for a blithe greeting, but Miss Morris only permitted "one good look," they complained. She swept them all out of the room and closed the door.

"Now will you get up, my darling? Or would you rather take another nap? You may do exactly as you like to-day, and get acquainted with us and understand us before we talk of rules and regulations. But I suppose you are used to them. Even a very little daughter of the United States Navy is

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brought up on them. There are not many here, and they generally get pretty well stretched as they go round the circle—the family circle, I mean.”

She was moving about, touching everything into order while she talked, for her fingers were so light and nimble that she seemed only to touch what needed it. Katharine looked down at the floor, and it seemed a long way from her as she sat on the bed.

“I can’t get down,” she said doubtfully. “And—and—I want to get up.”

They both laughed, for her doleful complaint sounded very comical. Miss Morris lifted her off the high mattress, and said she must have a little girl’s bed in a little girl’s own room that very day, and then she would feel quite at home. So, with much merry chatter, she was dressed and brushed and curled by those same pretty hands of Miss Morris, and, when she had said her morning prayers before the little altar, went down to breakfast.

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Miss Morris had managed to learn many little things in the chatter. She was longing to know all there was to know of the little life heretofore, but she was too delicately noble to question, lest she jar the sensitive child-heart evident in every changing expression of Katharine's face. The knowledge must be gained by degrees and indirectly, in these involuntary confidences that were very sweet and winning. Katharine spoke of the Ramseys in a way to make them friends in Brightmar, but, as yet, she had not come to the farther away and deeper memories in which Miss Morris was more interested than in anything she had ever known. For Fred had been her dearest brother and her companion until his marriage, and she had never ceased to feel the loneliness of the separation.

It had been a complete and lasting separation, such as too many families try to become accustomed to and never find it possible. There had been something about the marriage that old Mr. Morris had taken objection

to, and which Dr. Morris had refused to admit was objectionable. The old gentleman—and he was very old even then—had grown testy, and refused to hear reason, to see his son and his son's wife, and the wandering life of a naval officer had not helped in any way to bridge over the rupture. The old man had died suddenly at Brightmar, too, a short time before the fatal events in Dr. Morris' family, and there had been no time for any one to break the silence that had existed by the father's command since the day of his son's marriage. Miss Morris felt that there were to be many long talks between her and Katharine that would comfort and help them both.

Katharine, on her part, had asked some questions. She was not a stupid child, as we know, but she had been taught as a lady, and knew better than to show a rude inquisitiveness. She thought over the matter, and it did not seem "naughty" to put certain broad and leading questions, the answers to which would be a great satisfaction to her.

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"How many chil'ens is here?" was the first, with a use of Charlotte's grammar that still remained from the nursery at home.

"Here at Brightmar? Oh, nearly a dozen—yes, a 'baker's dozen'! You will find them all out before night and sort them to suit yourself. They are not all brothers and sisters, but cousins, and you are one of them. This is just as much your home, remember, as theirs."

"This is Uncle John's house," said Katharine gravely and half reprovingly.

"No, my darling, not any more his than ours—yours and mine and all of us. It was your grandfather's house, and he made it a home for all his grandchildren. Uncle John and Aunt Penelope and I are only at home here because it is yours and theirs. But we all love it alike, and you will love it, too."

"Yes," assented Katharine cheerfully. But, after a pause, she said, very low and half timidly, "Farder would have loved it. An'

mudder, too. It's—nicer—than the Yard. But that was nice—once."

"Was it, dear?"

As Miss Morris turned away to the window Katharine saw her lip quiver, and there was silence for a minute. Then, with a kiss that was very tender, they left the room for breakfast.

There were cousins in ambush everywhere as they went down the stairs, and Katharine's spirits rose at once. Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone were in their places, and Mr. Courtney was talking away as if he had not stopped since they left him last night. Such a jolly breakfast as it was! The children kept popping in and out of their chairs all the time, but it made no confusion, for it was the custom of the house for them to take turns in serving each other and their guests. They did it beautifully, first one and then another taking the hot cakes from the servant at the door, and bearing them prettily and smilingly from chair to chair. Thus there was perfect free-

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dom and homelike chatter, unoppressed by the presence of a servant. Then Jeff had to leave early to start for school, and Agnes had some errands in the village before the day's heat came on, and gradually the party broke up and scattered. Katharine was borne off by the smaller girls and the very small boys, Fred and Francis. Johnny was true to first love and clung to his mother.

What a day that was !

It was a holiday—"so that we may get used to each other," Polly said—and they had time to visit all the nooks and corners in which children delight, to show off all the pets, to tell all the interesting anecdotes and give all the thrilling histories of their short and busy lives. Polly—she was Polly Howard and an English girl, the daughter of Mr. Johnstone's only sister—had the most to tell and the most to say on all subjects. She was a regular little English sparrow, she was such a chatterer, and she had had a good deal of change and learned a good bit in her eight

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years. She had been "round the world" in her father's ship, and had seen the cities of South America, where oranges were sold by the barrel for a few cents and bananas were "just laid around loose," she declared, and eaten at all hours of the day and night. And wonderful as her stories sounded in the young ears, they were true. For Polly was as honest and as fearless as any little girl that ever trod a ship's deck. And since that is high praise for a full-grown man, it does excellently well for a small English maid.

Agnes was Jeff's sister, Katharine soon discovered, and a most important personage among the little ones. She was too old to romp with them, being thirteen, but she came often to look on, and everything was referred to her. They loved her dearly, and she was sweet and gentle enough to deserve it all. Miss Morris was her music-teacher, and part of the day she had lessons and her music to keep her indoors.

By dinner-time Katharine had sorted them

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all pretty well, and had fitted all the names to the faces of their owners. It had been a long, long, happy morning, and she had walked farther, climbed higher, and talked more than on any other day of her life.

Already she loved Brightmar, and already she felt the pride of ownership. Were there not cats and dogs, horses and cows, chickens and turkeys, and "whole lots" of other things that went with that ownership? It was certainly delightful.

"Does Mr. Courtney belong to it?" she asked suddenly as they were crossing the hall and she heard his voice in the dining-room. Polly looked puzzled.

"To what?" asked Agnes, who was with them just then.

"To Brightmar."

"Oh, no, indeed! He lives at Shirley. *It* belongs to him and it's lovely. But he is often here. He likes us and we like him."

"And sometimes," said Polly, lowering her voice to a distinct whisper, "he invites us all

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over there and gives us more ice-cream than we can eat."

"Well done, Polly!" said Mr. Johnstone.

"Who is it you're giving such a fine character as that?"

Polly hung her head and blushed. But Francis gleefully volunteered the information.

"She means Mitter Tortney. Mitter Tortney's the best peller of all."

And then there was a shout that quite covered Polly's confusion.

CHAPTER VI.

BRIGHTMAR.

BRIGHTMAR is a lovely place. It has acres and acres of woodland and meadow, for a wide river sweeps along its southern boundary, and the meadows are known far and wide for their rich growth. Then there are uplands and fallow fields, wheat and corn and clover fields, cattle-pastures and sheep-runs, and the gardens. The railroad crosses it, and the station is on their own land—the only one there is for miles around. It is fully a mile distant from the house, unless you know the path through the woods, or go down with some of the family who know it.

The house is old—for this country—but it

is large and fine in its old age. Mr. Morris had plenty of money, exquisite taste, and a liking for building, so that in his long occupancy of it he had enlarged it and improved it again and again. When Katharine first saw it, it stretched along the gentle slope on which it stood, with porches, galleries, verandas, and oriel windows in bewildering number, draped as they were with vines of all kinds. The gardens lay in front of it, and they were in beautiful order, as they had been another fancy of the late master, and his successors had too much respect for his likes and dislikes to forget his interest in the grounds he had so long worked to beautify. The walks were sometimes shaded and sometimes sunny, sometimes straight and sometimes winding, sometimes broad and sometimes narrow, and there were arbors and trellises of all kinds, with garden-chairs and seats in every pleasant spot.

The children were allowed to run and play at hide-and-seek, or sit anywhere they chose

to read or talk or study, but they were in honor bound not to touch the plants, not to be careless or injure anything. Each had a garden in quite another part of the place where they might do what they pleased in the way of planting and pulling up, digging and trenching, sowing and reaping, but in "grandfather's gardens" all was sacred.

All this was explained to Katharine in many tongues. Then she was escorted over the house and introduced to each room, to the garret and the cellar, to the kitchen and the great parlor. "Grandfather's room" was approached with much gravity, for it had not as yet been changed from the way in which he had liked to have it. But, with that exception, the whole house was open to the youngest inmate, and every one was expected to behave well in any place where he or she chanced to be. The many beautiful and rare things gathered together with such care and such expense were all safe enough, for not one of the children would carelessly destroy any-

thing, while, where there was no prohibition and a sense of ownership, there was an easy absence of curiosity and a sense of protection to be exerted. The place as it stood was a lesson in beauty to each child.

Mrs. Johnstone was energetic enough in maintaining it at its best. She was a good housekeeper and home-maker, and enjoyed her placid rule very much. Miss Morris was perfectly satisfied. Her tastes were different, and she was only too glad to be left at perfect liberty to follow them wherever they led her. To-day that was for a long ride on horseback with Mr. Courtney, and Agnes was free to go with the others, as they begged her to do.

It was getting on towards sunset, and they were a little tired, when Polly raced down the garden path from the terrace steps, calling them to follow her and rest in the stone alley. She had taken a particular fancy to Katharine and showed her "the cosy corner" when she arrived with the others.

"You know, you're company yet. You're next youngest to me. I was the last company, and I came two years ago. So I am two years old, and you only one day."

"I am five and more than a half," said Katharine with a troubled dignity.

"Oh, I mean at Brightmar ! All the others have been here ever since they were born. We came in late."

"So did I, Polly," said Agnes, who had brought her book to one of the stone seats. "And Jeff, too."

"But you have been here *forever*. Long enough, I mean, to forget when you did come."

Katharine was looking very earnestly from one to the other, as though revolving a question in her mind. Agnes put down her book.

"Does Katharine know who we are ? Can she tell us one from the other ?"

"Oh, yes ! I was teaching her all morning. I taught her lots of things, didn't I, Katharine ?"

"I know all the names," said Katharine, hesitating, "but I don't know why some are cousins, and some are brothers and sisters."

"Well, Uncle John's and Aunt Penelope's children are brothers and sisters because—well, because they *are*. And I'm *not*, because I'm Polly Howard, and my mother was Uncle John's sister Elizabeth."

Katharine nodded an energetic understanding of so much.

"You told me that this morning," she said.

"Agnes and Jeff are brother and sister to each other. They're 'the Albert Morris orphans,' as people say. I suppose they will call you——"

"Polly!" exclaimed Agnes. Polly flushed very red and became silent. She had very nearly said an unkind thing in reminding Katharine that she, too, was an orphan.

"She does not explain very clearly, does she?" continued Agnes, cleverly mending the breach in Polly's discourse. "Gretta is

the eldest Johnstone, and Terese comes next. Then Fred and Gertrude. There is only one year's difference in their age, and they are like twins——”

“We have twins,” interrupted Katharine—
“Alma and Alice, and so pretty. But—they have—gone away.”

Such a pathetic little pause as it was! Agnes felt it, and even Polly looked wistfully at the little speaker.

“There is no one else but Johnny,” she said hastily.

“And Francis forgotten? With those ‘towsers,’ too! And Aunt Mary’s three sons, Polly? Why, they belong to Brightmar as much as any of us!”

“But Stanislaus is a priest!” expostulated Polly.

“Not quite yet. Besides, what difference will that make? He must have his own people and his own home somewhere in the world. And George and Theodore are not priests. They are only away at college.”

Just then Miss Morris came down the terrace steps. She was in her riding-habit and carried her hat and whip, for she had caught sight of the children from the porch and hastened to them. She was laughing as she came down the path.

"Well, Polly Puss!" she said as soon as they could hear her distinctly without calling, "we have to thank you for a pleasant thing that will happen. You flattered Mr. Courtney to some purpose, although you did not mean it. We are all invited to Shirley for a day. What do you think of that?"

"Oh, Aunt Sara! And have you been over there? Did he go to see that it is all ready for us?"

"Now, Polly! The idea! I have not been to Shirley, but over to Blakeley. And we are not invited for to-morrow—not exactly! But Mr. Courtney has gone home, and he did invite every one of us to give him a whole long day at Shirley next week, particularly Katharine and Polly. Yes," as Polly uttered a little

shriek of ecstasy, "he mentioned those two names particularly to me and to Aunt Pen."

"It's too perfectly scrumptious for anything!" said the excited Polly, and she at once began pouring out to Katharine's eager ears all the delights they might anticipate.

Miss Morris leaned on the arm of the stone bench near Agnes, watching the two joyous little maids, and thinking, as she enjoyed their pleasure, how very small and young Katharine was to have been left in so sad a manner.

"She is a dear little thing, Aunt Sara," said Agnes in a low tone, watching the looks and their direction. "I have been with her all day, and there does not seem to be one ugly thing about her. She is like her sweet little face, and no one can help loving her."

Miss Morris roused herself from thought and looked pleased.

"Well, Agnes, you certainly know a good child when you see one, and I can take your word for what I am quite ready to believe. I

thought as much from the first moment I saw her last evening. What a blessed thing that she is so sweet and so happy-hearted ! Our children are a good sort, and I think there will be only one more of us—no stranger, hard to fit into our Morris angles and rub against our separate corners.”

“Is she like her mother ?” questioned Agnes, half hesitating.

“I never saw her mother, dear. But your Uncle Fred thought her the finest and most sensible woman he ever met, and, surely, this little one has been as carefully brought up as a blossom in a conservatory. That looks as if his wife was really his ‘better half,’ for your Uncle Fred—good and lovely character as he was—would hardly have made a success of bringing up a little girl. He could be strong and wise with a boy, but not with a girl. You know what I mean, I am sure. There goes the tea-gong !”

Agnes slipped her arm through her aunt’s, and they ran together up the long path. Cap-

tain Ramsey's idea of Miss Sara Bronson Morris was not quite just. He would have liked her better could he have seen her and heard her out there in that sunset hour.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF KATHARINE MORRIS.

THE invitation to Shirley came the next morning, but through the influence of Mrs. Johnstone the day was set for the following Saturday. It would be so much better, she said, to have such a glorious holiday at the end of the week, with no lessons on any one's mind and plenty of time to talk it all over before the next lesson-day.

“For you will all want to be talking it over from morning until night. You always do. And it does take time to dispute, even mildly, over every incident, rearrange the whole thing to suit each one of you, and then make up your differences. However, I must say you do make them up, and are always satisfied—in the end.”

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"But, Aunt Pen——" hesitated Polly.

"Well, Polly?"

"If it were only the *other* end of the week! Monday is one end, you know."

"Oh, Polly, how silly! No, no! That would not be the same thing at all. Besides, you will not lose by it. This is Saturday, and between now and next Saturday there will be fifty things thought of to amuse you that you would miss if you went to Shirley early in the week."

"Well, yes—that's true! I think I'd rather wait, after all. Oh, Katharine, you never did see such chestnuts as there are at Shirley! Just wait until we get there! I'll show you!"

"Oh, Polly! Chestnuts in June?"

"You know I wouldn't be such a silly! I know we must have frost before chestnut-time. I only just happened to remember how good they were last year. Come, Katharine, we'll go down into the garden and there we can talk without being laughed at by everybody."

"Do you mind the laughing, Polly?"

Polly stood thoughtfully near the door. It was Agnes who had spoken, and her soft voice was earnest and sincere.

"No, of course I don't care for it!" decided Polly. "It is not your fault when I mix things up so. But, really, I was trying just as hard as I could not to feel cross. A whole week! It is an awfully long time, after all."

"An' 'ou was dest tryin' to tate 'oor own 'tention, wasn't 'ou, Polly?" sympathized the solemnly wise Francis, or, as they called him this week, "Towsers." About every seventh day he made for himself some new title by a new excitement or a new mistake, into which he plunged with all the ardor of twice his years, and without the slightest endeavor to hide his feelings or conceal his errors from their laughter. Then the others immediately gave some suggestive nickname and wore it out on him.

"Oh, children, do—for goodness' sake!"

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protested Mrs. Johnstone, who was beginning to find the household accounts and memoranda too much for her amid such confusion. This time they paid heed to her entreaties and vanished like a breath, half a dozen voices echoing through the hall and rising newly on the ear from without as they raced into the garden.

"I am sure those children will frighten that little thing out of her wits!" said Mrs. Johnstone. "She's not one bit like Fred, is she, Sara?"

"Only in the expression of her eyes. I remember he used to speak of Eleanor's beauty, her dark hair, dark eyes, and brilliant color. Agnes asked me last night if Katharine was like her, and, thinking it over after I went to bed, I recalled these things. She must be like her, yet when she looks at me and smiles I see Fred very plainly. Dear, dear Fred! If father had only been—easier to please."

"You were here all the time and knew all about it," said Mrs. Johnstone, after a little

pause. "I never had the courage to ask for particulars when we came back from England. What reason had father for objecting so seriously to Fred's marriage? Wasn't she a lady? Or—what?"

"Oh, Pen, how odd you are! To wait all this time before asking! No, she was not 'what' at all. She was a lady. Fred met her at some Southern place, and fell awfully in love with her, as those naval officers always do. I don't think he ever once thought of father objecting to her because she was not a Catholic. It had never been brought home to him in any way, and she had no particular religion, he said. That made father worse than ever! He said a woman with no particular religion was not to be depended on for anything. You know how it always was with him. He first got into a state of mind, and then had to live up to what he said while in it. Poor dear! he could persuade himself that he felt anything he thought he ought to feel, and Fred was full of his own ideas, too.

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I believe he felt anxious and sorry himself after the thing was once presented to him in the right way, but he was so much in love. And then he thought it would be like attempting to influence her through her affections instead of her convictions if he began to make a point of what he had neglected before. Oh, I really don't know exactly how all the misery came about in the end ! But I do know I have never been really and truly happy for one minute since the day Fred went away forever. And he was so good about it afterward—he never rested until she was a Catholic. That was the only time he ever wrote to father—only the simple statement of the fact, but I know he hoped it would open a door to him. It was so respectful and considerate—a little wistful, too, I am sure. Father announced the fact at the table the day the letter came, but he never showed it to any one, and never answered it. But he was ill then. I found it after his death—only a few days before you came, in fact.”

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“ Oh, why did you not write to Fred ? ”

“ Do you think I did not ? I wrote at once, but it was while the fever was raging, and there was trouble about all letters, and I suppose he never saw it. At least he did not write. And—well, you know, I do hate to be slighted. Indeed, I cannot imagine any one but a very near relative doing such a thing, and then it would always make me as angry—as it did last summer.”

The sisters sat in silence for several minutes. Mrs. Johnstone was the first to speak, and she did it with the air of one determined to do away with the old sorrow and look at the best side of everything, finding it very good.

“ She must have been a lovely woman, poor dear ! A mother’s child speaks for her, particularly when she is a very little girl, sweet, gentle, obedient, yet good-natured and sunny-tempered. There has been no foolishness in that child’s bringing up, nor any selfishness, either. See how pleasant she is with all of them, and so nice with Johnny, too.”

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“Who’s that?”

It was Mr. Johnstone who put the question. He had been riding over the farm and down to the river and the mill, and came in, tired and warm, for a cooling drink and a half hour with the morning paper on the shady porch. His hair was all blown about by the morning wind, and his wide collar loose over his silk tie, but he looked a happy man, who had no cares as to dress or occupation. Very few men have that look, for the boys begin so early to sell and barter, and are so much afraid of losing or giving a cent’s worth, that they are filled with care before they are men, and never lose the pressure of it.

“We are talking of Fred’s little daughter,” said his wife. “And we are both of one mind—that she had a good, sweet, wise mother. What do you think of the little thing?”

“Think well of her. I have been watching them all at play just now. Polly can train any ordinary child to suit herself, and a namby-pamby child she can turn into her

tracks without trouble, but this little thing can hold her own if she thinks she should. She will do Terese a world of good, and will make a playmate for Gretta whom that fair maid will neither neglect nor tyrannize over. But I expected to find Fred's daughter something more than ordinary. He was a curious combination—tender as a woman and brave as a man. Now here's Sara with too much of the bravery and too little of the tenderness, and, Pen, you have too much of the tenderness and too little of the bravery. As for me——”

“You have too little of either and too much conceit!” laughed his wife, getting up with her hands full of notebooks and her key-basket, the indispensable accompaniment of every Southern housekeeper. “Well, the children are all undone now for another week, John. Mr. Courtney has been here to invite us all to Shirley for next Saturday. You and he may lay your heads together for all the jollification you can crowd into one day and have

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it all over at once. I like the children to be happy, of course, but they are such an excitable set that we really ought not to give them much distraction during the school-year."

"They'll take no harm from all Courtney and I can do for them. Besides, you do not consider that I am here to tame them down and control them."

Mrs. Johnstone and Miss Morris looked at each other in hearty enjoyment of his unconscious belief in his own stern discipline. Then they laughed outright, and merrily at that.

"John, you are a dear old goose!" exclaimed Miss Morris. "Oh, I haven't the slightest respect for your gray hairs when the children are not within hearing. But never fear! I shall uphold your authority every time you exert it, and indeed, when you do exert it, it is most effective. Only—you too often forget the power that lies with you."

"Well, I shall delegate it to the little newcomer. You will all see that she has an in-

fluence of her own, and it will be of great help to us if we can only help her as well as Fred and his wife started her."

"And who could have looked for it from Fred! He must have grown nobly. They were rightly mated, after all."

"'Being dead, yet speaketh,'" said Miss Morris thoughtfully.

"I wonder if I could leave such a record," said Mrs. Johnstone humbly.

"Pen, you have done your duty by your babies," heartily pronounced her husband.

"And you must remember that, so far, there is no indication that you must hurry to get your work all in. The unseen God knows that 'there is a time for all things,' and that Katharine's time with her father and mother was short—that it would suddenly and speedily draw to a close. You may depend that one thing fits into another in all His orderings, and He thus smoothed the path before the little orphan feet."

"Truly, I am sure!"

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Then each went about the day's doings with lighter and stronger hearts for the short interchange of thoughts on matters not of every day. The "little orphan feet" were beautiful already as those of the heavenly messengers, for they, too, were bearing God's word to those who sought to serve Him.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. COURTNEY AND UNCLE JOHN.

WITH Monday morning Mr. Courtney was at Brightmar—he had been there on Sunday, but there were other visitors, and nothing was said about the day at Shirley—to impress on the “grown-ups” that “the day” was to be a long one for everybody. It was to begin early and last until it was quite, quite dark, so that there might be the full enjoyment of an immense fire-balloon, which Mr. Courtney had thought of since Saturday and sent to New York for.

“There!” said Aunt Pen to Polly, who was capering about with Gretta in an original American ballet expressive of delight, “that is the first-fruits of your ‘patient waiting no

loss.' I reminded you it would be so. Wasn't I wise?"

"Oh, you're the best Aunt Pen in the whole world!"

"'Cept Aunt Sara," put in Francis, stoutly and defiantly.

"Oh, here, young man! You may leave all that to—other people," said Mr. Courtney. "Don't you know your Aunt Sara makes me do all her fighting? That is the way I work out my welcome at Brightmar. I would not like not to come to Brightmar."

"Oh, ridiculous!" said Miss Morris. But Gretta said she "didn't seem to mind it much," and Mr. Courtney said he didn't mind it at all, and the "grown-ups" all laughed, and Mrs. Johnstone hurried the children off to their lessons.

Katharine began her lessons this morning. There was a small cottage not far from the garden, which made the prettiest schoolroom imaginable on the garden side, and the prettiest and quietest home for Miss Althea on

the woods' side. Miss Althea was a friend of Mrs. Johnstone and Miss Morris, who taught the children and lived in the cottage with Mammy. It was just large enough for the pretty parlor and dining-room, with two large, low bedrooms in the second story—one for Miss Althea and one for a guest.

"Don't, whatever you do, don't try to live without a guest-chamber!" said Mrs. Johnstone when they were arranging the house. "You see, you are planning to live alone. You *must* have a guest-chamber. You may never find any one you care to ask into it, but it keeps your heart open and warm to have it ready in case you should."

And she proceeded to make it so peacefully beautiful and so inviting that as soon as Miss Althea saw it she began thinking over all the people she knew with a view to asking the one she liked best to occupy it at once. Mrs. Johnstone was wise in her foresight. Miss Althea had had trouble, and it had grown harder and harder for her to bear it with

hopefulness or with faith in her fellow beings. She was falling more and more into the way of shrinking from them. Mrs. Johnstone thought if she could only be coaxed to "show hospitality" the worst would be over, now that she was at rest and sheltered with those who loved her, and she would be spared a lonely life if there came new interests and new affections to take the places of the old ones gone. It had turned out that Mrs. Johnstone was right, and in the pleasure of putting her pretty room to use Miss Althea first realized that there was happiness left for her, and that she was her own old self, only stronger and wiser, and that the more tender and helpful she grew towards others the easier it was to forget all that had not been helpful and tender towards herself.

So there she was now, in her own house, with duties to occupy her, and her own pleasures to rest and refresh her, when little Katharine Morris crossed the door-step of the schoolroom for the first time. The children

had told her a great deal of Miss Althea, and Katharine was curious to see her and anxious to know if Miss Althea would like her. And Miss Althea—who had taken advantage of the holiday upon Katharine's arrival to leave home on business—was waiting on the step for her new scholar.

There was something of the curiosity and something of the anxiety in the face Katharine lifted to her welcome as Gretta introduced her. When Gretta was not wild with some frolic she had a very pretty way of her own about such things, and to-day she felt that there was a certain formality belonging to the importance of presenting her cousin to Miss Althea.

"Miss Althea, this is another of our children, and she will never give you one bit of trouble. She's just a dear, and she has a very pretty name. It's Katharine with a big K."

Miss Althea looked down into the dark, bright eyes, now a little softened and wistful with a pretty shyness.

"I have been expecting you, dear," she said. "I shall be very glad to have another in my little class, and Gretta is going to help me. She will teach you her old lessons before she forgets them. I am sure it will help her as much as it helps you. Wasn't that what you were planning, Gretta?"

"But I didn't know you heard me, Miss Althea. Was it when I was teasing Terese and Fred? They didn't tell you?"

"Of course I heard you. Wasn't it there on the porch? How could I help hearing? Now I shall give Katharine the desk next to yours, in the corner between the windows. You can take entire charge of her. Make her quite at home, and find the books she will need—the first books you used, so that she may have all those 'old lessons.'"

Gretta laughed, but she blushed as well. She had spoken boastingly and teasingly to Terese and Fred of Katharine's coming, telling them what she intended to do which they were not old enough to do. "I shall just have

everything to do with her. I am the eldest and the smartest of the family, and I shall teach her all her lessons. They are all old things to me, but you are neither of you half through them yourselves. Oh, she won't care for such little snips when she has me ! ”

Thereupon poor little shy Terese was inclined to cry, except that she was too humble to call so much attention to herself. Fred was of a sturdier nature, but he, too, was non-aggressive. Besides, it was “nobody but Gretta,” whose flights of fancy he was accustomed to follow with much philosophy.

Of this flight she was ashamed now, and was most kind and obliging in consequence to all the little ones. She herself was almost as grown up, she thought, as Agnes.

The day began well and ended in the same manner. Katharine liked school very much and also liked Miss Althea, and by the time lessons were over had very little anxiety as to whether Miss Althea liked her. She raced

across the garden with as swift and light a foot as any of them, and lifted up her voice in quite a Brightmar shout as the dinner-gong pealed forth.

“ Well, we have had a morning of it ! ” exclaimed Mr. Johnstone as soon as all were seated and helped. “ It is useless for any young man or young woman of this assembly to ask me what I have been doing or who I have been with, but I have been into town and out again twice already. Mr. Courtney may tell what he pleases when he comes, but he has a secret he wants to keep—so he will not be here to-day.”

“ Oh, Uncle John ! ”

It was a chorus of disapproval.

“ Is it a good secret, Uncle John ? ”

“ Polly Howard, do you think I would help him with a bad one ? ”

“ Oh, then, you know what it is ? ”

“ Where is your Aunt Sara ? ”

“ Oh, papa, now you are trying to change the subject ! Does Aunt Sara know it ? ”

"Your Aunt Sara knows everything. Ask her if she does not."

"Here she comes! Do you, Aunt Sara? Do you know everything? Papa says you do."

"Now, Uncle John, you have changed the subject! But you must tell us—you really must. It is too, too hexciting for anything!"

After that there was such an uproar, and such laughing, and so much good-humored fun over trifles, that it was certainly the merriest dinner in all the countryside. The Brightmar folks knew how to "behave properly" when it was necessary, and strangers never saw them in such a gale, but their father liked it, their mother liked anything that meant happiness and innocent light-heartedness, and Aunt Sara liked every one to please himself and allow her to do the same. In the true liberty of home they had, as Francis expressed it, "the very gooderest times!"

Not a day of that week missed seeing Mr.

Courtney at Brightmar, and he and Mr. Johnstone went off to town early and late. "Special dispatches from headquarters" arrived at each meal, and Polly grew more and more "hexcited" with each news item from Shirley. At all times they were on the tiptoe of expectation, and on Friday night every one was ready for bed at sundown and trying hard—but in vain—to go to sleep, so as to get up early in the morning for the great day. Agnes finally took a beloved book of nursery lore—the wondrous "Folk Lore of Ireland," in which they all delighted—and sat between the open doors of the little folks' rooms, reading aloud, and then softly singing the sweetest evening hymns in lower and lower tones until they dropped off to sleep. Mrs. Johnstone had known that it would be so, and told them that if they went to bed they could not get up again that night.

"You need not go one second earlier than your usual time, of course. It is your own idea, however, and you may go if you like,

but, remember, you must stay there. No getting up and coming down for any one after he or she is once in bed."

They were fast asleep an hour before the usual time.

"I am thankful that is over!" said Miss Morris. "To-morrow will carry itself. But I really thought these last few hours would shatter reason on its throne. I do hope Polly will never try her persuasive powers of flattery on Mr. Courtney again."

"Now, Miss Sara, Miss Sara!"

"Sara, you enjoy the whole thing yourself as much as the children," struck in the deep bass of Mr. Johnstone. "Don't waste time and strength on any disclaimers, for I know you do. In fact, we all do. Don't we, Pen?"

Mrs. Johnstone answered heartily: "We do, indeed. It is born in us, and Brightmar was created for that kind of people."

"Yes, I am modelling Shirley on it," said Mr. Courtney. "I like everything belonging to Brightmar, and everything about it, and

everything in it—and I want all of it I can get.”

“Oh, ridiculous !” said Miss Sara Bronson Morris with her loftiest air, marching off to the garden.

“You had better go and make it up,” said Mr. Johnstone.

And Mr. Courtney went as obediently as any little Johnstone of them all.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT DAY AT SHIRLEY.

THE sun rose gloriously, and all at Brightmar were up and dressed to greet him on the terrace, except Mr. Johnstone and Miss Morris. Mrs. Johnstone heard the children beginning the day at four o'clock, and rose promptly in unselfish care for those two sleepers. She was determined they should not be cheated out of their morning nap by the unlimited hilarity of those who had plenty of time before them to get used to disappointments and to deny themselves while promoting the comfort of others. Easy-going as she was, she never consented to the children fostering the selfishness of nature at the expense of any one else, young or old. Out on the terrace they must go as soon as they were dressed, and there

they must stay until the gong sounded for breakfast. Or, if they elected to stay indoors, there must be no noise until every one in the house except Johnny was up and ready for it.

There was a hurried, silent flitting, Polly smuggling Katharine out of Miss Morris' room and dressing her as she certainly was never dressed before, while Katharine held her quivering lips together with both hands that she might not laugh aloud, so delightful and novel she found it all.

But she remembered Aunt Pen's orders, and hers was not one of the voices that rang out before they reached the terrace, and she did not give full vent to her joyous anticipations until she saw her Aunt Sara's windows open and knew that she was up. Miss Morris' room was on the terrace side, and she would have been disturbed and annoyed, if any one had been, by a noise from that quarter.

Breakfast over, last commands given, small properties gathered together and cunningly bestowed in the "ambulance," as they

called the great covered wagon that served for the whole Brightmar party on many an expedition, they were really off by eight o'clock according to Mr. Courtney's special request. It was a long drive, fully seven miles before the Shirley woods were reached, and, as there had been frequent stopping-places for flower-gathering, for drinks at some favorite spring or wayside trough, for the long chase of a lovely ground-hackee with a wonderfully long and bushy tail, it was not so very early, after all, when they drove up to the front door with a flourish of trumpets. For Fred and Francis, to say nothing of Gretta and Polly and Katharine, were performing what Francis called "a boo-o-g-gler tall" on tin horns, small and large.

Mr. Courtney was waiting to receive them, with half a dozen dogs, who all turned tail and fled to parts unknown as the shrill sounds saluted them and their master.

The ambulance held them all with the exception of Miss Morris and Mr. Johnstone,

who were on horseback, and rode rather slowly through the lovely woodland ways. By the time they arrived the children were off after the dogs, the donkey, the peacocks, and Mr. Courtney's pet fawn, Silver. The wide porch, with its comfortable army of rustic chairs and settees, its low, broad tables, and many screens and vines, was certainly an inviting place for rest.

Jeff and Mr. Courtney stood together, and as they handed Miss Morris to the porch three young fellows marched arm in arm from the hall door and halted.

"Stanislaus!" exclaimed Mrs. Johnstone.

"George!" exclaimed Miss Morris.

"Oh, Theodore!" cried Agnes.

"Exactly so!" said Mr. Courtney. "That's what I call 'extremely neat.' No waste of time and breath, and you get them all in good order at one and the same time."

"That's the order, is it, in which you take them?" commented Mr. Johnstone, shaking hands in turn. "Stan, it seems your Aunt

Pen has you on her mind. What have you been about, my boy ? I thought we were sure of you. Agnes keeps her 'top eye open' for Theodore, and your Aunt Sara for George. They must have 'an intuitive perception,' for I have had the best of reports of all of you."

There was hearty approval in every look and tone, and the new arrivals seemed sure of an affectionate welcome. Mr. Courtney had thought of this as a pleasant surprise, and had hurried their return for the holidays. He was doubly anxious for an unbroken family party, as Stanislaus was to go that summer to the novitiate at Frederic.

"Now what shall we do first ?" inquired the host, when all questions and answers were at an end for the moment and there was breathing-space.

"Nothing more than we are doing," decided Miss Morris. "I am tired to death of 'doing' things. Let us just sit still here and talk to our own people. We never have time to talk at home"—here there was a burst of

laughter—"I mean time to talk leisurely and delightfully as we talk to company. Now we are all company, even Mr. Courtney—who never gets company treatment at Brightmar, because, in the goodness of his heart, he is always helping us to make company of somebody else."

"Sara, that is delightful to begin with!" said Mr. Johnstone. "Courtney, you score one the first thing. What have you to say, Mrs. Penelope Johnstone?"

"I think it is perfect rest here. And, besides, the children can find us whenever they want us."

"Which will be before long. Courtney has turned them loose in his domain, and some of them will soon come to grief to open the ball."

"I put every tool out of sight, locked up the cutters and the lawn-mower, barricaded the pig-pens, and chained up the Alderney herd. Further than that, I had the water let out of the old mill-race, and hid the lever of

the headgate. I don't believe they can find anything to do them harm."

"Or—that they can harm," commented Theodore.

"Theodore, you don't know our children," said Mrs. Johnstone reprovingly.

Every one laughed at her solemn rebuke.

"She's right, though," said Mr. Courtney. "They have been taught to mind their own business and to be careful even of that. It was not because I feared for my property that I locked up and barred out. All that is safe enough, but innocent ignorance can be as dangerous as malicious mischief—therefore I am cautious."

The precautions were successful, and the day passed in unclouded delight. The children came and went, an endless stream of information, and the elders listened and sympathized with each one, while their own quiet conversation recalled the past, dealt with the present, and looked on to the future. "Polly's delight"—the ice-cream—was dealt out with

unsparing hand in the course of the morning, and there was a very elegant dinner, with all the different tastes remembered and indulged. Mr. Courtney was so often at Brightmar, and had so frequently consulted the different members of the family as to the success of his *fête*, that it was quite possible to minister to each individual's liking in a special manner. He certainly was a model host, with all other good qualities thrown in.

There was great scope for varied enjoyment, for the largest liberty made a great part of it. To wander at will all day and to play when they "felt like" it, was a delightful programme for one day, at least, however tiresome untrammelled pleasure grows in time. And even one day began to drag as evening shadows deepened ; and when twilight completely overshadowed them, the tired party gathered quietly on the porch, and dropped into easy attitudes around their elders, with whom Johnny had slept the sleep of innocence for some time. But still dauntless was

Francis, who answered his mother's gentle question, as she touched the drooping head upon her knee :

“Tired, my boy ?”

“No, mamma, not till Mitter Tortney mates de balloon.”

“Well, I think it is quite dark enough now for it,” said Mr. Courtney, rising to the occasion. “You must all come out on the lawn for that. It needs space to show off his charms.”

“His ?” was the many-voiced question, followed by the disappointed remark in a lower tone : “O—h ! I thought it was a real balloon.”

Mr. Courtney said nothing, but with the older boys made a dark group on the open lawn, moving to and fro, suggesting, exclaiming, and now and then laughing outright. Presently something within their circle began to heave and struggle, and then stood upright—but very “wabbly”—a huge black man with an immense mouth and a pair of terribly

bright eyes, which drove Johnny and Terese closer to their mother. He grew rapidly into a perfect giant in a blue and white striped shirt, an enormous scarlet necktie, and a pair of wide scarlet trousers, who shot suddenly into the air, and rose beyond the tree-tops, bending and bowing as though in convulsions of mirth, and followed by the cheers and shouts of the now thoroughly excited spectators.

"Oh, what is it?" whispered Terese in her mother's ear, and holding very tightly to her hand.

"Nothing but the fire-balloon, my darling. It is made of rubber—just a big doll like Johnny's black man, Tar Baby. Don't be afraid of it!"

"Oh, look at him!" screamed some one. "He's going away—he's going away!" as the upper current caught him, and turned his face from Shirley towards the river.

"Let's run after him!" cried Polly, springing to her feet from the grassy bank where

she had lain on her back for a better view of his airy capers.

They were off in a minute, scattering like fairies on the green. In the dusk they were soon lost to the lookers-on, although on the open it was light enough for them to see where they were running. Shouts, cries of mirth, exclamations of admiration and amusement as they watched him double and turn and twist, still making his way onward and upward, and then—a wild, loud shriek of terror and pain, half smothered and gasping.

“Oh, Stephen, the old well!”

It was Miss Morris who spoke, and it was Mr. Courtney she called by his first name as she sprang off like a deer in the direction of the cry. Mr. Courtney was on her track in an instant, calling as he ran :

“Jeff, ring the great bell ! Tell what has happened !” And Miss Sara’s voice came back imploringly : “Come—oh, come !”

Mrs. Johnstone ran on in terror that almost palsied her. Her sister’s words had recalled

the long-forgotten well they were never allowed to approach when they, as children themselves, had spent happy days at Shirley. Rapidly the whole story swept through her mind—the change in its sparkling, ice-cold waters to a dingy, tainted fluid utterly useless, no one knew why ; the search for a new well-site, so hard to find, the building the new well, and, at last, the abandonment of the old well, and, as every one supposed, the filling in and sodding over forever of the once beautiful waters. Oh, could it indeed be the well ?

Yes, too surely it was the well ! In every stage of terror the children came flying to her, trembling and crying, trembling and speechless, throwing themselves upon her, and clinging to her with little frail hands, that were iron in their hold at that moment.

“ Oh, thank God ! Oh, my darlings ! You are safe, safe, safe ! ”

“ Oh, not all ! ” wailed Freddie. “ Oh, the

dreadful hole ! They went right down—in a minute ! ”

“ Who ? ” she asked in a whisper, her voice failing her.

“ Tessie—and—and Katharine.”

It was Polly who answered her. Then Mrs. Johnstone loosed herself from the clinging hands and left them.

The first stars were out above the gaping blackness and the swirling dust around which had already gathered more people than seemed possible in so short a time. Miss Sara and Agnes stood a little to one side, locked in each other’s arms.

“ Is it—death ? ” gasped the poor mother.

“ No, no, Pen ! They—speak. Everything is being done. The men are all here. They have gone down for them. Oh, poor Pen ! ”

They loosed their clasp to take her into it, as the great fire-balloon struck another current of air, and, chilling off, sank earthward, throwing a helpful glare upon the spot where

all the interest centred. Mr. Johnstone came to them in strange agitation.

"Pen—Pen, dear!" he said, and stopped suddenly.

"Oh, my husband! Our little, little girl!"

"They have found Katharine," he said slowly. "She is conscious—does not seem much hurt—they will have her up in a little while. But—Tessie——"

"My child is dead!"

She said it very quietly. Her husband kissed her reverently without a word.

For a minute she stood with her hands over her face before she moved forward to the edge of the black gap where they laid the slender little form in its white dress, so awfully white and cold against the dew-damp grass. Silently her husband and Miss Sara stood over her as she knelt beside it, a protection to her sorrow and partners in her prayers.

The work around the well went on rapidly and skilfully, for Mr. Courtney and his men

were too nearly like sailors not to be able to "rig" the necessary "tackle" for descent very easily. In a surprisingly short time another small white burden came to the surface in strong, friendly arms. Miss Sara slipped noiselessly away to receive it.

"Oh, Aunt Sara!" whispered the weak little voice. "They said down there Tessie was dead! Where is she?"

"With her father and mother, darling. Are you much hurt, you poor baby?"

"Only my arm and my foot—and I am so sleepy."

The little voice trailed off into silence, as Mr. Courtney lifted the little girl to carry her to the house. Miss Sara walked beside them up the grass slope to the porch, her eyes blinded by tears. It was now a moonlit night, and the children's "great day" at Shirley was over at last.

CHAPTER X.

A JOYFUL DAWN.

NEVER before had the family at Brightmar passed through such a night as the one upon which they now entered. Mr. Johnstone and Mr. Courtney were as efficient in their dealings with grief as with joy, and there was much to do. The doctors—all they could reach—were brought as soon as possible, and they soon found that Katharine had made a wonderful escape. A few bruises and possibly a sprain or two were all her injuries. She had fallen in the very centre of the well, slipping down with the surface-earth upon the crumbling remains of old branches and tree cuttings with which the well had been fraudulently filled, unknown to Mr. Courtney. A light platform had been laid upon

this frail foundation, and the earth heaped over it to the level of the sod. Gradually decaying with time and weather, even the light touch of the scampering feet—it lay out of any beaten track—had caused the cave-in. Katharine and Tessie, less fleet of foot than the older and heavier ones, were the victims of the trap.

Tessie had been borne to the house and laid upon the stately bed of the great chamber, where they left her alone with her mother. The sweet little face was scarcely colorless and the happy look still upon it, with only a pathetic touch of wonder to disturb the perfect peace of its innocence. Her soiled and torn dress—the light showed it—was not yet removed, and her mother's tender fingers smoothed and folded it around her in the longing to do something for her.

She had insisted on them taking the three doctors at once to Katharine, begging to be left alone with her child. Mr. Johnstone, however, could not rest without the doctors'

word before he yielded everything, lifeless as Tessie certainly appeared, and he was just about to leave the more fortunate Katharine with the one doctor, who could do all she required, and take the others to his child's bedside, when he heard his wife call him, hurriedly, eagerly, tremulously.

"Come, doctor!" he cried, and ran quickly up the stairs.

"She moved—oh, I am sure she moved! The lamp does not flicker, does it?"

The doctors bent over the bed from the other side as Mrs. Johnstone spoke. The one looked doubtful, the other hopeful. Equally, they began all efforts to revive the child.

"She is still living," said the doubtful one to the trembling mother.

"She will live—she is all right!" exclaimed the younger and more hopeful man. It was a hard struggle to restore consciousness, although it was evident before many minutes that she breathed freely. She had been a little in advance of Katharine, or,

rather, to one side, and the fall had thrown her against a stout beam, less mouldering than the thinner planks, and her head had struck the stones of the walled side of the well. But when morning dawned, even Terese was saved, and the sunlight glorified the earth for every heart under the Shirley roof.

“Well, mother,” said Mr. Johnstone—and he had never called her that before—“Courtney has about all there is of Brightmar this time, young and old, joy and sorrow, mourning and thanksgiving. I think I shall gather up the tribe and go to Mass on our way home. They can stand that much more, although they are rather a seedy-looking family. God knows we every one of us have double and treble reason for going this morning!”

He spoke with deep emotion, and Mrs. Johnstone could only look her answer.

She and Miss Sara remained with Katharine and Terese, but in the course of the day they, too, took their departure for home.

The ambulance was put to its first use, and the two invalids were snugly placed on its long leather mattresses, where they managed to get not a little pleasure out of "driving out in bed." Katharine could turn and twist among her pillows quite nimbly, protecting her sprained wrist and ankle very skilfully, but Terese was very languid, and her head was heavy and sore to the touch, or at the jarring of the wheels over the rough places in the road. But she was always a quiet little thing, and her wordless smile was a placid indication that "it was well with her."

"Oh, how glad I am to see Brightmar once more in such happiness!" exclaimed Miss Sara, as they drew up at the door.

"I am more than happy," said Mrs. Johnstone. "I am content."

"Thank you ever so much, Mr. Courtney, for the best day I ever had," was heard in Katharine's voice, as she "made her manners" in Charlotte's most approved style. Mr. Courtney had ridden over with them, and

was waiting to lift her out when Mr. Johnstone took Terese.

"My dear little girl!" he said tenderly. "And I have to thank you for the greatest relief from sorrow I have ever known—you and Terese. I should never have forgiven myself if you—had not come home from Shirley."

"It was 'innocent ignorance' on your part that time, but it did quite enough mischief, did it not?" said Miss Morris, giving him the kindest and brightest of all the smiles she had ever given him.

It was a glad, glad home-coming. And the gladness was heart-deep and enduring.

It quite lifted Terese on its tide of rejoicing into a braver and more confident spirit, because it showed her, in ways she could not misunderstand, that she was greatly loved and valued. It carried off every trace of Katharine's newness. After that, she was always one of the Brightmar children indeed, and sure of it. For a long time she and Terese

reckoned every event from "the time we fell down the well at Shirley," and every mention of it was made with a solemnity and earnestness that proved the impression it had left. The others, too, were never inclined to treat it lightly, with the exception of Polly, who was heard to say that, since it did not hurt so very much, she wished it had been her instead of Katharine, because it made one of so much importance, and was "so nice and romantic." It had been a most serious affair to all of them.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN RAMSEY AGAIN.

NOT alone at Brightmar was it a matter of serious import. The Yard had not by any means resigned its interest in "little Katharine Morris," and when Miss Morris wrote the very next day to Mrs. Ramsey, with a very particular reference to the Captain's interest in the "dear little thing," there was quite a stir in the Captain's quarters, and an influx of callers until a late hour to renew all their memories of the child and her parents. Miss Morris wrote this time in a strain so different from her first letters that the Captain was at once convinced he had entirely "misunderstood" the whole state of things. This grateful remembrance of Mrs. Ramsey's kindness, this warm and affectionate interest which

detailed so minutely Katharine's escape and her position in her home—neither of them belonged to the Miss Sara Bronson Morris he had connected with that dashing, iron-lined signature.

"I tell you what!" he exclaimed, when they were talking it over, "I believe—I have more than half a mind to stop over at Brightmar when I go up North. I did think I would never go near them—not even for the child's sake. I thought they were a kind of people I do not like anywhere—a foreign graft, you know, on American stock. But—I would like—to see for myself."

"I am glad the thought occurred to you," said Mrs. Ramsey. "I have always intended to go to see Katharine if I had the chance, for I want to know exactly how she is situated. And you never know what people are until you see them in their own home. You will certainly be near them when you go to Washington on that business. You must go over to Brightmar. Over, indeed! I

haven't an idea where the place is, but it cannot be far from Washington."

So it was settled.

The Captain, with his methodical ways, had replied to Miss Sara's letter as soon as it was received, but several times after their talk he began another letter to her in which he mentioned the possibility of calling at Brightmar before long. But when he told Mrs. Ramsey, she said she thought it best not to write.

"A dozen things might happen to prevent, and then the child would have the disappointment instead of the pleasure. And they would write, of course, and set a time, and the time would be sure not to suit with the business—it never does—and you would not get there at all, or get there in a stiff, horrid way you would not like. Just go, and the first day that suits your duties and yourself, go to Brightmar and surprise Katharine. Surprises are not pleasant things for all people, but they are delightful to children."

The Captain tore up the last letter he had written that day, and followed Mrs. Ramsey's advice.

Thus it was that one bright day, about a month later, the Captain stood on the steps at Brightmar, somewhat dusty and heated from his walk, but filled with an admiring sense of Brightmar's loveliness. It seemed to fit in, after all, with his first idea of Miss Sara Bronson Morris and her grandeur, and he gave his card to the servant in his stately "officer's way" and "walked in on his inches." But the next minute there was the swift patter of little feet as he had so often heard them, and there was Katharine. A rosy and a happy Katharine indeed, of whom no one could doubt that she was loving and beloved, cared for and carefully trained to fulfil a destiny her mother and father would both have rejoiced to see.

"Oh, Captain, my Captain!" she cried out, flying to his arms. "Oh, I didn't think you could come now! I thought it would be

a whole long, long while—a year, you know. Where is she? Did you leave her at the station? With Johnny? I must go tell Aunt Sara to send for them this very minute. She won't like it one bit if I let them wait. Nor Aunt Pen—I haven't any Aunt Mary, don't you know. She's dead, but there's Aunt Mary's boys. They're very nice boys, too. And Uncle John—he's the chil'en's father. But he's away to-day or he'd go for them himself."

She poured it all out in that delighted excitement of a child taken by a happy surprise, and now was running off when he stopped her, laughing.

"Wait a minute—wait a minute, girlie! There is no one at the station. She could not come, for I had to hurry off and hurry back on business for the Yard. And Johnny could not come without her. But I have brought you lots of love from both of them."

"Whole lots?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"Johnny, too?"

"Johnny, of course. He can talk now almost as fast as yourself."

"As fast"—leaning towards him and speaking softly—"as I could talk—that day you carried me home. Can he talk like that?"

"Well—not quite like that. But he is learning very fast, and he grows very fast, and——"

But here the Captain had a great surprise himself, and a very happy one. He rose to meet the beautiful lady who was coming towards him with outstretched hand and smiling eyes and a most charming manner altogether. Was this indeed Miss Sara Bronson Morris, of whom he had been half afraid because she wrote such a dashing letter with such a big, black signature? But even the best and wisest people are sometimes influenced by trifles such as these.

"I am very glad to have an opportunity of thanking you as we should—if we can, that

is !—for all the kindness you and Mrs. Ramsey showed to our dear little girl.”

“This is my Aunt Sara,” explained Katharine. “And she’s good like Mrs. Ramsey, only different.”

The laugh which greeted this introduction was the “parting peal” of the last remnant of stiffness between two strangers.

“You are all different, but just as good,” stoutly protested Katharine, with flaming cheeks.

“And we all thank you for your good opinion, my darling, and for telling us of it just as you have told it,” said Miss Sara. “I only wish Mrs. Ramsey was with you to enjoy it with us,” she continued, turning to the Captain, “but I am sure she is not, for I saw you ‘a long way off,’ crossing the brook, and you were alone. I knew the uniform, but not the wearer. If you had but sent us word, we would have been so glad to spare you the warm and dusty walk.”

Then the Captain again explained it all.

"When we learned how nearly she had slipped from us," he concluded, with his arm around Katharine on the sofa, "we felt that it would be a great satisfaction to see her once more. So I was commissioned to come and look at her for both Mrs. Ramsey and myself."

"And now that you are here, we shall claim you until the very utmost limit of your time, and make much of you to the utmost limit of our powers."

It was said with the tone and manner which satisfied the Captain perfectly that he was welcome and that the welcome was as high as the roof and as wide as the four walls of any home in Christendom.

The Captain had a week at Brightmar, and left it thoroughly satisfied with all he had seen and heard—with Katharine, with her family, and with her home. He wrote as much to Mrs. Ramsey, but it did not all come out until he was back in the Yard, at ease in his own quarters.

"Yes, I am perfectly satisfied," he said.

“Perfectly ! I used to be a little anxious—I am ashamed of it now. It was the right thing in every way. She is better provided for than she could possibly have been otherwise, she is surrounded with as much love and as good care as even you could have given her—but with no more, except that there are more of them than there are of us,—and she is with her own people. That is a great thing—a great thing ! I have an idea that God knows where He means a child to go when He sends it, and He sends it to those among whom its duties lie, where it shall get and give all that it needs most to help it serve and glorify Him. Katharine is at home in the best sense of the word. And I must own that I am all the better satisfied because we have not lost her, but have gained with her new friends any one might be proud of anywhere. Katharine will be a close-forged link between us. She is grateful and faithful. She will never forget.”

And she never did forget.

CHAPTER XII.

"FRED'S LITTLE DAUGHTER."

BRIGHTMAR in June and Brightmar in November are two different places. To a city child Brightmar in November might seem gloomy and dull on a first arrival, for the terrace is gray and bleak, the gardens are stripped of their blossoms, the arbors and shaded nooks are bare of their rustic seats and tables, and the leaves are scattered over walks and benches. But within doors all is so warm and cheerful, the great fires are so ruddy and lively, the hall and its gallery echo so with the gay voices and the coming and going of the little feet, that the outside world is forgotten, and no city home, however elegant, is so stately and so spacious as this fine old country home. A few days in it will

bring to the surface more pleasures than these, and the child who looks and learns will see beautiful things in winter as well as in summer. The leafless trees show like fine gray lace against the winter skies, and the ruddy light of a winter sunset makes a glorious glow in the woods by which to walk. Then walking and riding are both pleasanter in cool weather than in the warm days—that is, before “the bitter winds do blow”—and things unexpected are always “cropping out.” The Brightmar children say so, at any rate.

The summer had passed, the time for lessons had come again, they had all been hard at work for two months, and now they had reached another holiday—the first days of November. At Brightmar it had long been the custom to keep as real holidays All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day. Old Mr. Morris had called home his children from far and wide for those two days so long as it was possible, but of late Dr. Morris and Mrs. Johnstone had been far away at that season, the eldest

son—father of Jeff and Agnes—and the widowed mother of Stanislaus and his brothers were dead, and Miss Sara alone remained. No holiday was thought of, but a reverent keeping of the feasts. The three elders resolved this year to renew the old fashion, and show the children what had been the custom of their own childhood. It seemed all the more desirable that they should be together, now that there were so many dear ones missing from earth whom they might hopefully pray for as among the holy souls.

It was Katharine's first experience of cold weather. She had been born in the far South and had never left it, except in the middle of summer, until she came to Brightmar in the spring. She had become accustomed to all Northern weather and ways so far, and had grown so rosy and tall and plump that she looked as though she had faced many a crisp morning and many a fresh evening frost among the mountains and the woods. Les-

sons were coming on finely with Miss Althea, and Gretta was finding it rather a struggle to get through the "old lessons" they were now dealing with, for Katharine read as well as she did herself, and was far more attentive to every lesson than Gretta had ever been to anything but poetry. She had caught up to Freddie, and would soon pass him, for Freddie was not ambitious and was satisfied to be quietly happy and at peace. He dreaded a scolding, though, and worked tolerably well to escape one, so he was not troublesome. Terese went quietly on always; Francis had not yet come into the schoolroom for regular lessons—he kept Gertrude company in very short and simple lessons at their mother's side, for Gertrude was too delicate and backward to be counted more than a very little one, although she was nearly seven. She and Johnny were coupled together even oftener than she and Francis, while Freddie, who looked her twin, was far beyond her in mental gifts. But the doctors insisted she only

needed time and no pressure to restore all she had lost through a long illness two years before.

"What is the matter, my darling?"

It was Miss Sara who asked the question, and it was to Katharine she spoke. She had noticed the little girl's increasing quiet and shrinking from the others for the last day or two, and coming into her room on a bright afternoon, had found her standing, idle and sad, at the window.

"I am only thinking, Aunt Sara. Nothing else."

"But of what? Have you not something to think of all the time, little maid?"

"Yes, always. But not—like—this."

Her voice sank to a whisper, and she pressed her face against the encircling arm Miss Sara had folded round her shoulders with a gentle caress.

"And what is 'this'?" persisted her kind questioner.

"Don't you know, Aunt Sara? To-

morrow will be All Saints' Day. And—the next day—it will be All Souls' Day."

"Well, darling?"

"I heard you and Aunt Pen talking yesterday of the feasts, and of the flowers and the graves and—the prayers. And—I—I have more to pray for than all the others, and—mine have—only me!"

It was the very saddest little voice Miss Sara had ever heard that spoke the last two words, and at first she could not answer it. She could only hold her little niece in silence for a minute or two.

"Oh, Katharine, little Katharine," she said at last, "what a patient little girl you are to have borne with your careless aunt all this time without a word! Did you think we had forgotten them because we did not speak of them?"

Katharine nodded timidly.

"Never, my darling! We would have spoken long ago, but I dreaded it. It is very, very sad to us to have lost them in that way—

to have lost all your dear mother's sweet wisdom and goodness without ever knowing her. Every day you have been with us you have taught us more and more of your father and your mother, and have made us feel more and more how much we would have loved her—as much as we loved him, our own dear brother. I have wanted to talk with you about them so often ! But I really did not know—forgive me, dear !—how much you remembered, how much you cared."

"Oh, Aunt Sara ! I remember everything, and I think, think, think all the time—indeed I do ! But I must not cry, you know. Mrs. Ramsey said they would be pleased if I was good, and I am good—mostly good ! Oh, I do want to be !"

"You are, darling. Our dear Lord and His dear Mother know that you try, that you show to all of us you wish to honor them and glorify Him."

"I do try hard. And I stop many a time to think just what mother told me I must do

to be good. She always used to tell me, and then father kissed me when I did it."

She hid her face again and Miss Sara felt her tremble. But the pouring out of her grief and loneliness—which she had felt for the first time—was a relief to her little heart, and they had a long, long talk which neither of them ever forgot. After such a beginning it was easy for Miss Sara to ask, and wonderful how clearly Katharine could answer. She must indeed have stopped many times to think over her mother's teachings, and she must have tried—far harder than she ever seemed to be trying—to do as she was taught. They had thought she was "naturally a good child," but Miss Sara saw there had been many a struggle and many a silent victory. It was not all done, either, to please the dear father and mother. There was a child's innocent and reverent trust in God the Father, a child's wisely simple understanding of the story of our blessed Lord and His dear Mother, a child's looking to the Strength of

the mighty, a child's turning to the Hope of the hopeless, in a child's troubles and perplexities. That talk brought them very near to each other, and gave the little girl a friend in her aunt who not only loved her for her father's sake and as "a good little thing" who gave no trouble, but as a thinking, striving, earnest little soul, with a mind and heart far in advance of her years.

The feasts were beautiful days indeed. They were kept in the old fashion of the Morris family—not sorrowfully, not solemnly, but marked with a tender reverence for the holy departed and the unknown dead. No lessons, of course, and every one at Mass, and the graves all beautiful with flower and wreath and cross and branch, gathered by the children and shaped by the skilful fingers of the elders. The neighborhood around Brightmar was Catholic—there were but thirteen Protestants in it, the Dutch miller, his wife, and their eleven children—and the customs of the Morris family were only those of the place,

except in the greater degree because of the ease with which wealth overcomes any difficulty in the keeping of a holyday.

The week after the two feasts was also without lessons, and it closed with a family party, where more than "the Brightmars"—as Katharine, by a happy thought, had named their own party—were added to the number. Every one they could gather in, who "belonged" to them or was connected by marriage, they had invited, and all except Stanislaus Donne, who had entered the novitiate at Frederic at midsummer, came during the day or the evening. The only one present who was neither relative nor connection was Mr. Courtney, and "who ever heard of anything at Brightmar without him?" as Polly commented when some far-off cousin, after vainly trying to trace his pedigree in the Morris line, remarked upon his presence with wonder.

Katharine, of course, attracted no little attention, for all had heard of her, and nearly all had known her father. "And this is

Fred's little daughter?" she heard so often that the question seemed to adapt itself to every face turned kindly towards her. In the reminiscences exchanged around her and over her small head she seemed to find a new father—a gay, bright, fun-loving father she had never seen. It was many years before she learned of the shadow that fell from Brightmar on that sunny nature, and softened it to the exquisite tenderness of the father of her memory.

"I never saw him after he entered the navy," many of them said, and only one—a tall, grave, dark-faced man who had married a cousin—had ever "been South" and visited him in the Yard, before Katharine's time.

"He was the right man in the right place," he said. "Never was a nobler fellow, and he had a splendid wife. Splendid and lovely both, in her beauty, and, I fancy, as much so in character. It is just about a year since—" some one touched his arm with a

look at Katharine—"since you came to Brightmar, isn't it?"

"Not quite."

But she could not explain, for she knew he meant to say "since they died," and she understood the ready kindness which so quickly changed the sentence to spare her the reference.

"Everybody is good to me, Aunt Sara," she said, when telling her of the occurrence that night. "I think they are very, very good. They always remember I have no father and mother, and they all try to help me forget it, don't they?"

She had been talking it all over, and asking who this was and how that one came to be a cousin, and many little things had come up of the same kind, where consideration had been shown "Fred's little daughter."

"Even when they don't call me that and don't love my father, people are good to me. They are better to me than to the others—Jeff, you know, and Agnes and Polly and

Stanislaus and his brothers—because—because I am left all alone—all, all alone. I believe, Aunt Sara,” speaking in a lowered, reverent voice, and lifting earnest eyes to the listening face bent over her—“I really do believe Our Lady told Our Lord she was *so* sorry for me that dreadful time—when I woke up, you know, and was so frightened because there was nobody there—and ever since He has told all the other people to be sorry for me, too. And they *are* sorry, and that makes them good to me. And I love them, every one.”

“My darling, the whole world will be good to you if you go on as you have begun, loving every one, and trying to help every one, and trying not to give any one pain or trouble of any kind. But, like you, I believe Our Lady told her Son she was sorry for you that day, and that He remembers it, too. He is sorry for those who are lonely and sad Himself, you know. And I believe He is specially sorry for the lonely little children, and remembers how

sweet and loving His own Mother was to Him when He was a little child. Depend upon it, there is a very special Providence for the orphans. And, oh, may it always keep Fred's little daughter ! "

And thus was answered the question every one was asking just one year before : " What is to be done with little Katharine Morris ? " How dark to those who asked stretched out the future of the little maid, how sad to every one the lonely lot of the once tenderly cherished child ! Kind hearts were moved with sympathy, kind and generous hands were ready to minister to her, the best there was to give was given without stint from the first moment she was found—and yet no one seemed to remember that love more generous, sympathy more tender, care more unceasing, and protection more efficient than any were surely hers. " When thy father and thy mother forsake thee," who is it that has promised to " take thee up " ? He whose promises never fail. And He well knew what

was to be done with the dear little girl whose gifts and talents, whose strong and loving heart He had fashioned for the life that was to fall to her lot.

Innocently, trustfully, patiently—as a child can so often be patient—doing all that she knew of right, and “stopping many times” to remember what she had been taught so that she might do it, Katharine had passed as by angel guidance through the first year of orphanage. And it left her “in pleasant places,” to grow into the sweetest reminder of her lovely, lost mother and her faithful, duty-honoring father. Unspoiled, because unconscious, generous, grateful, asking nothing, yet receiving all she most desired, no tenderly cherished darling of the most anxious parents was ever happier or more beloved than “Fred’s little daughter.” Miss Sara’s prayer for her was surely heard and answered.

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